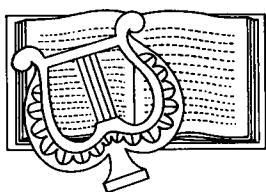




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In Memoriam

Ruth Candler Lovett

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Geraldine :
A TALE OF CONSCIENCE.

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Geraldine:
A TALE OF CONSCIENCE.

. BY

E. C. A.

VOL. III.

Second Edition.

‘ In necessariis unitas, in dubiis libertas, in omnibus caritas.’

LONDON:
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GERALDINE .

A TALE OF CONSCIENCE,

CHAPTER I.

————— “ The retrospective glance
Of pensive memory fell, with the gleam
Of hope celestial, on the wings of time.”

NINE years after the events recorded in our preceding volumes, in the opening spring of 183—, the bells were ringing merrily in a sea-port town of our western coast, a band of music played on the pier, and in the placid waters of the harbour, vessels were lying at anchor, while the chief object of interest appeared to be a steamer, which, for the first time, was destined to carry passengers and freight to the Sister Isle. Several of these passengers were parading the pier, together with the idle and curious of the town. “ She ought, by rights, to have started to-day,” said a sailor, in reply to the question of a stranger of noble and foreign appearance ; “ but it’s all well as it is, for a large party of the passengers don’t come into town till to-night.”

“Do you chance to know at which of the hotels this party is expected?” said the stranger.

“No, sir,” replied the sailor.

“Nor the number of the party?”

“There are four, I believe, sir, expected on board. Can you give something, sir, to a poor tar, that’s been wounded in honorable service! Thank ye, sir. I’ll be sure to find out the party for you, sir, whenever they may put up; but then where am I to find you, sir?” The stranger wrote in pencil his temporary address on a visiting card, and throwing it to the sailor, turned from him and from the motley throng, fixing his eyes upon the steamer, in deep, and apparently, melancholy thought; till, at length, roused by the national air, now played by the band, as they passed him in their march from the pier, he caught an object of engrossing interest in a travelling equipage, advancing with rapid pace from the north road, and traced its progress to the principal hotel of the place.

This rencontre, however, produced only disappointment, for the expected passengers of the Royal Victoria steam-packet were still far from the town of * * *. Their travelling carriage had, on the preceding evening, stopped at a little inn near the convent gates of N—, and shortly after, one of the nuns had been summoned to the convent parlour, to welcome a long-absent friend. Nine

years had seemingly made no change in the fair face of the nun ; for the wrapping head dress, which had served to hide her more youthful charms, equally concealed the ravages of time. The hair, the brow, the throat, could tell no chronological tales. These nine years, also, had been passed, as though they had been nine months, in pious useful monotony, with peace of mind and heart ; and the simplicity which pervaded thought, language, and manner, assisted in retaining the appearance of youth.

It was not thus with her whom she greeted. The interval from three-and-twenty, to two-and-thirty, passed in vivid thought, and action, and feeling, with joys and sorrows of this earth's emotion, had brought forth, in all its lights and shadows, each hidden quality of the mind and heart, and stamped its impress on the countenance of the guest. The lofty brow was still smooth, candid, and open, but there were hollows at the temple, and a depth in the eye, which belong not to youth, and something there was of an appeal to the sympathy of others, something of a softened, matured, and chastened expression, which more than atoned for the rich bloom which had passed for ever !

After a long silent embrace, the nun spoke ;
“ At length then, I see and speak to you once more ! ”

“ Yes ! Angela,” replied the widowed Geraldine

De Grey, "I have at length returned, to make amends, if you be so willing, for the silent years which followed my bereavement. I have in truth much to tell, and I have therefore resolved to crave a night's hospitality at your convent, and some hours alone with you, before I proceed on my journey."

"Ah ! how willingly will both be granted," said Angela ; "but are you alone?"

"I am not travelling alone," said Lady De Grey, "but my companions are at the little inn, until to-morrow. I arranged it thus, that I might give myself entirely to you for the remainder of this day, having to speak not only of the last two silent years; but in order to make you perfectly comprehend both my position and my feelings, I must give you a rapid sketch of those earlier years, and of that lost happiness, on which I dared not dwell when first a widow."

"And can you do so now?" said Angela, as she looked on the faded countenance of the once brilliant Geraldine.

"I can," replied she, "for the past now causes no strong emotion : I live only in the future ; yet I scarcely know whether to tell you at once the step I contemplate, or to lead you to it gradually by a history of my life, from the time we last spoke confidentially to each other."

Angela's heart said, "give me the truth at once,

and afterwards the explanation," but she had long schooled that heart to bear denial, and refusing it the indulgence of its tender curiosity, she said,—
"I have no choice but for your greater consolation."

"Then I will first give you an account of the principal events of my life, and of my mental history, that you may trace in all, the wonderful mercies of our God. Go, therefore, dear Angela, to obtain all necessary leave for remaining the whole evening a listener to your guest. Find at what hour to-morrow I can thank dear mother prioress for her hospitality, and then return to me,—for the evening draws on."

This was soon accomplished, and the two friends drew their chairs close together. The eventful history commenced, and, ere the hour for closing the convent door towards the out-quarters, it had terminated, and Angela possessed the confidence of her friend; but we cannot thus briefly dismiss the joys and sorrows of our heroine; and, while she again rests within the convent precincts, we will fill up the brief and rapid sketch.

The title of "Child of prosperity" could never, perhaps, have been more truly applied to Geraldine Carrington, than when, in the autumn succeeding the events of her father's return to England,

she accompanied him to the chosen land of Italy. Three months had she been a member of the holy Church she had chosen, or rather, to which she had been chosen by the Divine Shepherd of the fold, and her conditional baptism, her confirmation, and the ever-adorable mysteries of the altar, had shed their strengthening and sanctifying graces on her soul. To this interior joy had been added General Carrington's open sanction of her conduct, which induced many of those cherished Protestant friends, who had previously upbraided or deserted her, to return with renewed affection: the Catholic body, to whom she had been but little personally known, now sought her; she became the object of kind interest to both parties, and had but one cause of sorrow, which was the constraint and gloom which still hung over her father. And from this, too, he aroused as from a spell, when again on the Continent; both heart and mind expanded, and Geraldine felt once more that she was his darling child.

While on this journey, he related to her much of the history of his concealed faith, the premature discovery of which had been so galling to him. "That good creature Goodwin," said he, "and the steward, were, after the death of your mother, the only persons entrusted with my secret, except, of course, my confessor; and he had my promise, that I would divulge the truth, and openly exer-

cise my religion, as soon as you, Geraldine, should be of age. Would to God that I had done so; but military distinction engrossed my soul, I yielded to ambition; and Catholic emancipation, which was granted the year after my last promotion, sealed my lips, as I thought, for ever. Your own proud sense of honour, Geraldine," continued he, "would tell you how impossible it would be to divulge, in the prosperity of one's party, whether in creed or politics, that which in adversity one had been driven to conceal, and you may imagine what my feelings must have been, when this avowal was torn from me by treachery, and made the topic for every idler's comment. My only plan since then, in dignity as in policy, has been to approve and patronize your open conversion to Catholicity during the hateful months of my stay in England. It is for me no effort to say, 'My native land good night.' My nature is too akin to her gloomy clouds and chilly temperament. Give me my contrast, in the sunny skies and light-hearted peasantry of the continent."

Geraldine was in too much excitement of happiness to analyse her father's sentiments; it was enough for her that he treated her with love and confidence, and with wrapt interest she listened to his subsequent history, especially to the fact, that during many years the subterranean chapel in the abbey ruin had been the sacred spot where General

Carrington had met his spiritual father, and attended the duties of his holy faith.

It was early in October when our travellers entered Italy, on the eve of the festival of the Rosary, and there were sights and sounds of joy, as they journeyed onwards, to make the heart feel as if born anew. The rustic altars and the garlands, the votive offerings, the evening litanies, gave a foretaste of the feast which lay before them, when, on the ninth morning of their journey, the postilion stopped on the noted spot on the level of the Campagna, and the General, making his daughter stand on the seat of the open carriage, exclaimed, with the exulting Italian, "Roma!"

"Ah!" cried Geraldine, "do I really behold Rome! Rome from whence seems to arise the mystic chain of communion with the heavenly Jerusalem, and towards which, even from my childhood, my heart has so strongly yearned! Surely it is in mercy to the weakness of his creature that God permits me such earthly happiness!"

"You are in the land of enthusiasm," said her father, smiling, "and therefore may give vent to your feelings without dread of sneer or sarcasm;" but Geraldine could exclaim no more; her heart was too full of emotion as she continued to gaze on the "Eternal City," round which, in homage, nature sinks subdued.

On the morning succeeding this, to her, me-

morable day of her entrance into Rome, Geraldine visited the principal object of interest within its consecrated walls, and the joy of her heart continued unabated. Her father was her sole guide and companion, and his fervour, if not equal to her own, was at least sufficient to encourage the free expression of her sentiments. Again and again did they visit St. Peter's; and no Jewish maiden, within the temple raised by the favoured king to the Jehovah of her nation, could feel more the majesty of the divine presence, than did our Christian heroine, when, kneeling before the altar whereon was the consummation of the typical rites, offered to the same triune Deity, in the temple of the Christian world. She traced the humble rise of the Jewish church, flying from their enemies, wandering in the desert, and fixing their temporary altar where they could best hope for security,—to the prosperous time, when, all things being ripe, God commanded that a temple should be built unto him, and his “glory filled the house:” she then recalled the similar progress of the Christian visible church, passing through the red sea of persecution, and desert of famine, fixing their altar where they could best hope for security, at length could erect to Him this thrice sacred edifice for the covenant of the new law : saying with Solomon, “Is it then to be thought that God should indeed dwell upon earth? For if the heaven and the

heaven of heavens cannot contain thee, how much less this house which I have built? But have regard to thy servant, and to his supplications, oh Lord, my God : hear the hymn and prayer which thy servant prayeth before thee this day, that thy eyes may be open upon this house night and day, upon the house of which thou hast said, My name shall be there. And when a man shall know the wound of his own heart, and shall spread forth his hands in this house, then hear thou in heaven, in the place of thy dwelling, and forgive !”

After having given all the time, and thought, and feeling, he considered due to St. Peter's, General Carrington, accompanied by a learned Italian friend, took our heroine at once from Christian Rome to the ruins of her predecessor, that chronological and historical order might be preserved in her sight-seeing. Geraldine felt some regret at postponing her visits to the other basilicas, especially those of St. John Lateran and Santa Croce, but she had no avowed wish opposed to that of her father : accordingly, the following month was devoted to the fulfilling the plan laid down, and, at its close, Geraldine had visited every spot of classical interest in ancient Rome, and this under every advantage which could enhance her enjoyment. Like every Protestant female of education, she had, from her childhood, been made familiar with the poetical fictions, as well as the

historical facts, of Roman antiquity, and could understand, if she could not always sympathize in, the classical enthusiasm of her friends. Still she had not found in the antiquarian or mythological details of temples, tombs, palaces, triumphal arches, baths, and aqueducts, sufficient food for the present state of her mind; and the retrospective, and more general view which succeeded the individual sight-seeing, was more in accordance with it. She would now gaze from the tower of the Capitol, or from the terrace of the Palatine Hill, over the ruined trophies of the Queen of the Seven Hills: tracing her history from the pastoral to the iron and then golden ages of her splendour, and through those degenerate years which might be termed the ages of brass and clay, to the terrific scourges which at length laid low the mistress of the world. In silent awe and admiration she beheld fulfilled the prophecy of the hallowed seer of Patmos, and as she traced the immense extent of the ruins, could not but join in the predicted lament: "Alas! alas! that great city, which was clothed with fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and was gilt with gold and precious stones, and pearls, for in one hour are so great riches come to nought!" The centre—the personification—the essence, as it were, of Paganism, who had said in her proud heart, "I sit a queen, I am no widow, and sorrow I shall not see," now lay humbled in

the dust; and Geraldine, touched by the remembrance of her genius and her glory, would forget that "she had drunk of the blood of the saints, and of the martyrs of Jesus," till the distant dome of the Christian temple meeting her view, would bid her join the song of triumph, saying, "Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets, for God hath judged your judgments on her, Alleluia!"

Amongst the majestic ruins stood one which was fraught with constant interest to the Christian; and Geraldine, no longer occupied by its details, would unweariedly sit on the moss-grown corridors of the Coliseum and gaze on the vast area beneath. The sainted forms of the early martyrs were grouped before her, in venerable age and maiden youth, around were the countless multitudes, their subdued, but heartless tones of expected entertainment, mingling with the low growl of the beasts of prey in the dens below. Then arose the increased stir of excitement, as the guards withdrew from the victims, and the keepers threw open the doors of the den, when the wild yells of the beasts were overpowered by the deafening shouts of the populace. So wrapt would Geraldine frequently become in these vivid retrospective visions, that it was difficult to rouse her attention to the present soothing and lovely scene presented in that vast area; yet gladly did she now look on the cross

which marks the consecrated ground, and watch the succession of devout Christians kneel and fervently kiss the symbol of their faith, and hope, and love;—once the scorn, and now the standard of the Eternal City.

One evening, one bright Italian evening, when Geraldine had revisited this favourite spot with her father, they, for the first time, encountered one of the many parties of their English acquaintance, from whom they had hitherto escaped recognition. Protestants, English Protestants in Rome, were exactly the beings most formidable to the General's morbid sense of ridicule, and his tactics had hitherto preserved him from the encounter. The meeting, however, was now on neutral ground, and nothing seemed likely to prevent each party from being as correctly pagan as could be desired. Colonel Leonard, fellow-officer with General, when Major, Carrington, in the early and glorious conflicts in the Peninsula, had, since the peace of Europe, become a successful author on subjects connected with his past career, and at the time of this meeting in the Coliseum, was the guide, tutor, and playmate of his two fine boys, just emancipated from Eton, filled with classical learning and enthusiasm, and with levity on every Christian theme. Their elder sister, and a valiant old lady, their grandmother, formed the family party. After the

introduction, and some preliminary talk, the conversation was kept up with ease and spirit between the two elder gentlemen, and the youngest boy, who seemed under but small restraint. While our heroine listened for a time with interest to the dedication of that vast theatre by Titus to his gods, in the slaughter of five thousand wild beasts, and the combats of the gladiators, she thought with admiration also, of the mock naval fight, when numerous gallies rode with ease in the artificial waters of the area; but in vain did she hope, that when the feats of the mariners, the gladiators, and the wild beasts, had been duly commemorated, the blood of Ignatius, Polycarp, Justin Martyr, and other venerated Christians, might be remembered; the party moved forward only to bestow lamentations on the broken marble seats, the overthrown steps and vomitories,—when, as they descended into the area, the cross, from its conspicuous size and position, attracted their attention, and a chill struck on Geraldine's heart on seeing her father return the smile and shrug of Colonel Leonard, as they together looked on the sacred symbol.

“The French, during their occupation of Rome, took the liberty to knock down that huge black cross,” said Colonel Leonard, “but the pious souls, here, have stuck it up again, in defiance of all

taste, and have also brought back those horrible pictures of the pilgrimage of the crucifixion, which are enough to scare away all but papists."

"Look !" cried Charles Leonard, the youngest boy, "if you will watch those people kneeling, you will see them kiss that old black cross, to gain two hundred days' pardon for all their sins."

"Come, General," said Colonel Leonard, "now is our time, let us kiss and be cleansed !"

The General laughed, and the party advanced to the centre of the area.

"Why does not my father take this opportunity to say, that the kissing that cross can release him from the guilt of no sin whatever?" thought our heroine, as she passed with the rest to the spot hallowed by the martyrs' blood, and by the privilege granted by the Church. An aged Capuchin friar had just given place to a young peasant girl, who knelt and kissed, with earnest simple devotion, the holy emblem ; and the instant she arose, Geraldine, who had lingered behind the rest of the party, knelt also at the foot of the cross, and devoutly pressed to it her lips.

"Two hundred days' indulgence for Miss Carington," cried the young Charles, who alone had observed her. The rest turned, and greeted her with mirth as a practical lover of a joke, while the peasant girl fixed her eyes earnestly on Geraldine, and then, reassured by the expression of her

countenance, smiled, and pursued her pilgrimage round the area, where were fixed, at intervals, the stations of the Passion.

“I declare I should never have thought you had so much fun in you, Miss Carrington,” cried Charles Leonard.

“But,” said his sister, laughing, “do you know that these Protestant pranks will not do in Rome, Charles? we must be all on our good behaviour.”

“Ah!” cried the General, entering seemingly into the jest, while he cast an awful glance at his daughter, “so, I find, that I am not to trust you from my sight, Geraldine. Here, take my arm.”

“Miss Carrington,” said Colonel Leonard, “is only following the proverb of doing at Rome as do the Romans.”

“Colonel Leonard,” said Geraldine, in a firm voice, regardless of the pressure on her arm, “I am a Catholic, and may therefore well do at Rome as do the Romans.”

The silence which ensued was first broken by General Carrington, in a voice unchanged to all, save one practised ear: “Why, if it be impossible not to feel an increase of ‘patriotism on the plains of Marathon,’ and of ‘piety at Iona,’ who can expect to catch no inspiration within the walls of St. Peter’s? We are all Catholics, I suspect, if the truth were told, while under that dome. And

what think you," continued he, turning still more confidentially round to Colonel Leonard, "will be the enthusiasm of this pretty little daughter of mine, during the ceremonies which are approaching?"

Colonel Leonard, much puzzled, gave another shrug, said something about beauty in tears of devotion, and of the tendency of the female mind to the poetry of religion; while the General devoutly wished his friend, with his party, as far from himself and Rome, as might be consistent with charity, and the welfare of the Leonard family.

"What think you, Colonel," said he, "of wintering at Naples, and returning here for the Easter ceremonies, according to the usual mode with the English in Italy?"

Geraldine heard not the plans for Colonel Leonard's winter and spring quarters, for her heart fluttered as it had learned to do in England, and many sad though indistinct presages filled her mind. They had now reached the Forum, having intended merely to pass through its grass-grown solitude. But this was not to be: for, on this wholly Pagan spot, all breathed more freely, and amidst the broken capitals and fallen pillars of the ancient senate, the hitherto-silent Henry Leonard was moved to eloquence, and his auditors to sympathy and applause. Geraldine, seated on stones which once had echoed to the harangues, the acclamations, the popular tumults of the ancient republic,

gazed and listened with interest to the young and impassioned orator, as he recalled the days when Scipio there had trod—Cicero there had accused the guilty Cataline—and there too had Cæsar fallen, while Brutus had there remembered only that he was Roman. The senate which had dictated laws to the world which its arms had conquered, had now passed, like its crumbling walls, for ever. Hushed were the voices of her orators, stilled the throbbing hearts of her patriots, and tears stood in the eyes of the young enthusiast, as with extended arms he invoked the manes of the mighty dead, bidding them bring back the greatness, the freedom, the stern virtue and patriotism of their own, their only Rome; for she alone had been the queen of cities, the empress of the world!

As the speaker paused, Geraldine thought of that highly-gifted scholar and orator, who, like Henry Leonard, had been so fascinated by the studies of the schools, and the charms of rhetoric, as to despise the style of the Scriptures, being unable from the false glare of his former studies to relish their humility, or enter into their spirit, till truth having prevailed, and all the powers of that mighty mind and glowing heart won over to its cause, the great convert had burst forth in a strain surpassing all that heathen voice could utter, or heathen thought conceive.* She thought too of the vision of St. Jerome, wherein having replied at

* *Te Deum Laudamus.*

the judgment-seat, that he was a Christian, "Thou liest," said the judge, "'Thou art a Ciceronian, for the works of that author fill thy heart.'" But Geraldine's thoughts were recalled from the early ages of the Christian Church, when, aroused by the young orator's appeal, there suddenly appeared from behind the three remaining columns of Jupiter Stator, not the great father of the mythological world, nor any of his invoked worshippers, but two modern Christians; one, by his implements, apparently an artist, and the other—(who, on his approach, was greeted with friendly warmth by Colonel Leonard)—proved to be that writer on Pagan and Papal Rome, whom Geraldine had met the preceding winter at Sedgemoor Priory. After some desultory conversation, the whole party, including the artist, a young Italian, moved homeward into the modern city; and, as the 'dolce far niente' was the order of the day, they all by invitation proceeded to the Palazzo P——, the temporary residence of General Carrington and his daughter.

The first object which attracted the attention of the young Italian, in the reception-rooms of the Palazzo, was the Spanish guitar, which, on account of its being an old favourite as well as a light travelling companion, our heroine had brought with her from England. From a comparison between the guitars of Spain and Italy, it was in easy course to try the tones of the former, and, at Geraldine's

request, Signor Busto, after a rapid and executive prelude, accompanied himself in several popular airs with great feeling and effect.

During this performance, the two young Etonians were disturbing their sister from any enjoyment she might have had, by sundry pinches and pushes, to induce her to obey the will of the elder brother, which was, that she should request Miss Carrington to sing a new and favourite English song, the words of which, Henry Leonard had written in the blank leaf of his pocket Horace.

"I know these lines by heart," said Geraldine, "and I have often sung them to their appropriate air, but my heart goes not with them."

"Is that possible?" cried Henry. "Oh! do sing them, and you will recover your enthusiasm."

"What are the lines?" said the General, taking the book, and rapidly glancing through them; "Geraldine, these are beautiful, and you can, beyond any one I know, give them their due force and expression. Tune yourself, then," added he, "as well as your instrument."

Geraldine complied, and whether from obedience or recovered enthusiasm, gave forth the words of the following song, with all the mingled pathos and energy they demanded.

"Rome! Rome! thou art no more
As thou hast been,
On thy seven hills of yore
Thou sat'st a queen.

Thou had'st thy triumphs then
Peopling thy street,
Princes and scepter'd men
Bowed at thy feet.

“Rome ; thine imperial brow
Never shall rise !
What hast thou left thee now ?
Thou hast thy skies ;
Thou hast the sunset's glow,
Rome, for thy dower,
Flashing dark cypress bough,
Temple and tower.
Rome ! Rome ! thou art no more
As thou hast been !”*

When the song had ceased, and while the heart-felt plaudits of her auditors were given, Geraldine remained in melancholy thought, leaning on her guitar ; at length roused by the enquiry, “ Why had she objected to the song ? ” she raised her head, and the whole expression of her countenance was seen to change from pensive regret to the fire of enthusiasm.

“ Who dare say,” cried she, “ that Rome is no more ! that she has nothing left her but her skies ! Falsely sang she who penned that lay, who wilfully forgot the martyrs' blood,—the apostles' hallowed tomb ! Were there no triumphs peopling her streets, when consecrated bands chanted in solemn tone the deprecatory Kyrie Eleison, and the plague was staid ? When o'er the castle, which now bears the commemorative name, an angel

* Hemans.

hovered sheathing his sword, while the celestial choir was heard to sing the resurrection hymn of Christian Rome ! Are there no triumphs peopling her streets, when it is hither that the tribes come up, the tribes of the Lord, to adore, in the temple of the mighty God,—the Lord God of Hosts ? Has He not planted here His Church, and given to this nation, chosen to foster her, genius withheld from Palestine, that his bride may be adorned with every grace and ornament fit for her espousals ! Has He not said of the nations, by the mouth of his Christian prophet, ‘ Behold I will make them to come and adore before thy feet, and they shall know that I have loved thee’ ? Rome ! thou canst never die ! In thee is fixed the mystic ladder, whose top is shrouded by the wings of angels, and the incense of celestial thuribles. Rome ! thou canst never die ! Both night and day are heard in solemn chant the praises of thy God. Rome ! thou canst never die ! Thy faith shall save thee, with thy hope, till merged in the new Jerusalem, thou shalt prove indeed the eternal city, glowing with charity, for ever in the heavens !”

Geraldine, while her spirit had been carried on to bear testimony of the high position of the Christian Queen of the seven hills, the spiritual mistress of the world, had unconsciously arisen, and as unconsciously had her eyes met and fixed on those

of her father, who, after an amazed and troubled glance, had bent his on the ground: nor did he raise them till some instants after the deep silence which had succeeded this burst of indignant fervor, when, nearly behind his daughter, in the entrance of the apartment, calm, mild, and benignant, stood the venerable and venerated Cardinal W—. “Your Eminence is ever welcome!” cried the General, bending his knee, and kissing the ring, consecrated by relics, usually worn by cardinals.

CHAPTER II.

“There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamed of in your philosophy.”

Hamlet.

“GERALDINE,” said her father, on the following morning, “were you aware of the entrance of the Cardinal last night?”

“Indeed I was not,” she replied, “but great was my joy at seeing him, for he is a holy man!”

“I believe he is,” said the General; “at any rate he is a Cardinal, and his presence put to flight all those idlers, who had flocked round you, and to whom you were playing the improvisatrice, that is, you were playing the fool. It was a fortunate thing for you, child,” added he, “that your audience changed from Protestant to Catholic, and that your wild ardour has created an interest for you in the breast of his Eminence, for you had been acting in defiance of all caution, ‘di mal in peggio,’ ever since you kissed the cross in the Coliseum. What could induce you to be so incautious before those Protestants?”

“I did not expect to be observed,” said GERAL-

dine, "but to own the truth, I thought only of gaining the indulgence."

"You could very well have substituted for that devotion, some other good work," replied the General; "for instance, there are short prayers and aspirations to which indulgences have been granted. I should much prefer your saying these quietly, to any appearance of parade and ostentation, and I hope you will remember this, when absent from me. The Cardinal's amiable relative, the Contessa C—, is much interested in you, and has kindly offered, not only to conduct you over Catholic Rome, but also to supply to you in every respect possible, the place of your mutual friend Lady Winefride Blount. Now let me hear of no more enthusiastic fits."

"Are you not to be yourself my guide, as you have hitherto been, dear Padrino?" said Geraldine.

"I will escort you wherever the Contessa thinks my presence necessary," replied the General, "but I have been over these churches, and palaces, and studios so often, that unless you make a point of it, I would rather be excused."

Geraldine's heart swelled and her eyes filled with tears.

"Now why is this?" said the General. "What is it that pains you?" Our heroine's feelings were too undefined for her to reply. "Well, well,"

added he, "I will go with you. But let me tell you, Geraldine," as she sprang to him with renewed smiles and caresses, "you are a completely spoiled child!"

Several families of the English Catholic nobility and gentry, were in Rome, during the residence there of General Carrington and his daughter, and they soon became known to all. The pious and affectionate heart of the Contessa C— had warmed towards our heroine from their first meeting, and a friendship ensued, as advantageous to Geraldine, as it was interesting to her elder friend. Our heroine's visits over modern Rome, were from this time under Catholic auspices, and treading thus on holy ground, with those, who, in the highest purest feelings, were congenial to her, she forgot she had ever wept or doubted, except when the past was, in gratitude, called to enhance the present.

With her new friend, and escorted either by General Carrington, or some Catholic Priest, Geraldine successively attended the holy sacrifice of the mass, and then viewed the monuments and relics of the seven basilicas, of which she had hitherto seen only St. Peter's. During these visits, they frequently came in contact with the mere sight-seeing parties of English, whose presence could not fail to be distinguished, by their Protestant disregard of holy places and ceremonies. But if amongst the many strangers, GERAL-

dine saw a face she knew, it was easy to avoid any formal recognition, and she received but little personal annoyance from any of her countrymen or women, except the determined champion of pagan times, Mr. Ellis, who seemed as if determined, or destined, to be met, wherever she might bend her steps; and with his sketch, or note-book in his hand, to remain within listening distance of all she said. This was the more vexatious, as it always involved the disappearance of General Carrington from her side, but the annoyance proceeded no farther, till one day, waiting on the steps of St. John Lateran, a little apart from her friends, who were busily engaged in some change of plans for the morning, Mr. Ellis took the long intended opportunity of addressing her. "Miss Carrington," said he, "I pity you! You are now able to compare the past with the present, and the struggle in your mind must be great, to preserve truth, and yet not risk the imputation of contempt towards this upstart city. Your's is not the mind to be dazzled and cajoled by all the tinsel and parade of priestcraft: and in spite of the ardour with which some weeks ago you cast the halo of your own genius and devotion over these monuments of degradation, you must now perceive that sad and wide is the contrast between Pagan and Papal Rome!"

"I cannot imagine," said Geraldine, smiling, "why Protestants ever visit, still less why they re-

visit, modern Rome; and I must recur to the enigma on seeing you, for the second time, in this portico of a Christian temple."

"I am here," said Mr. Ellis, "because I am aware of some omissions in the first edition of my work; and as the second edition is soon to appear, I am revisiting these basilicas, where so many interesting remains of antiquity have been covered or defaced by pious moderns. I hope your friends will not omit to show you, if they have not done so already, the four ancient columns of gilt bronze, made during the reign of Augustus, from the 'rostra' of the conquered vessels at Actium: but, perhaps, the remembrance of Cæsar, Mark Anthony, and Cleopatra, would be sacrilege and treason, within view of the 'Santa Scala.'"

"You are right," said Geraldine, "I might have looked with curiosity and interest at these remains of pagan antiquity, had they been elsewhere, but how remember them, when about to view the steps which the sacred feet of Jesus Christ descended from the judgment-hall of Pilate?"

"I wish you joy in believing all these monkish legends," said Mr. Ellis.

"What you offer me in mockery, I accept in earnest," said Geraldine. "I do feel joy in my belief; a joy, far beyond all that your learned researches and brilliant reputation can ever bring you."

“I believe you,” said Mr. Ellis, with a smile, in which regret and bitterness were mingled; “and perhaps I do ill to destroy a delusion which makes you happy, by asking you, how is it possible, that this staircase should, in the first place, have escaped the total destruction of Jerusalem; in the next, have remained for centuries in obscurity, and at length have been discovered by Sixtus V, and set up for the adoration of the faithful?”

“Veneration, not adoration,” said Geraldine. “And now let me ask you, how is it possible that these gilt bronze columns, even if ascertained to have been formed from the rostra of the ships at Actium, should have escaped the sacking and pillage of all the hordes which desolated Rome, when, although these barbarians could not appreciate the value of the matchless works of art which they destroyed, they yet fully understood the worth of metal; and if unseen or disregarded by former ravagers, how came they to escape when the city was laid in ashes by Alaric? Now, spare yourself the trouble,” continued she, “of giving me proofs of the authenticity of these columns, for I believe that their history can be traced in a manner satisfactory to wiser heads than mine; but if I give historical belief to the authenticity of one relic of antiquity, why not do so from authentic records in the other case? Why not conclude that, as the judgments which fell on Jerusalem were suspended during forty

years, the Christians were on the constant watch, during that period, to secure all the relics possible of their divine and beloved Master, and that returning from Pella, after the siege, when terror and confusion reigned, they secured and concealed these precious steps?"

"I do not pretend," said Mr. Ellis, "to enter the list with you, Miss Carrington, because I merely pretend to human assistance, whereas, when this fails you, the supernatural is always at hand, as it was with that very clever and active old lady, the Empress Helena."

"Remember," said Geraldine, "that the supernatural aid given to the Empress Helena, when she secured and brought from Jerusalem the true cross, the sacred steps, and other relics, rests on historical evidence, so authentic, that it can no more be doubted, than that the symbol of our faith appeared to Constantine, her son, on the eve of that battle which, in its event, gave peace to the Christian world."

"I believe one, as much as the other," said Mr. Ellis.

"You will reject neither," said Geraldine, "if you will permit the powers of your mind to investigate and decide, without the interference of the will which is biassed, and taking the lead, carries all by force, not argument."

Here Geraldine was borne off by her friends,

but not to the 'Santa Scala,' as she had expected, for that sight was reserved for a day of peculiar devotion, when pilgrims would be seen ascending the steps in penitential prayer ; and, accordingly, Geraldine did thus visit it, some months after, with the deepest feelings of commemorative interest, when, although bound by a promise to her father not to indulge in any demonstration of her pious enthusiasm, she watched the train of "blessed mourners," and remembered the promise to those who thus mourn, "that they shall be comforted."

With the churches of Saint Clement and Saint Agnes, terminated the sight-seeing for the present, and Geraldine's visits to the basilicas and other temples of divine worship, were, from this time, solely from devotion. The season of Advent had arrived, and the calm solemnity of the city became more established during these weeks of preparation, for the glorious burst of joy at Christmas. Amongst the English Catholics all gay assemblies were over ; but on the Sunday evenings a few friends still met in the apartments of the Contessa C——, and amongst them General Carrington and his daughter, the latter pondering over her reluctance to make this change from Protestant to Catholic observance of the sabbath.

"Sunday is a day of joy to both Protestant and Catholic," said she to her father, "and Advent should be with each a time of serious thought, at

the close of the natural, and opening of the ecclesiastical, year, as well as of preparation for the festival of Christmas. There are fervent and pious hearts of each denomination now in Rome, and yet how will they misjudge and condemn each other ! The Protestants will forget, or will give no proof that they remember, this to be a season of penitential retrospect and sedulous preparation. On Christmas-eve, it is true, they will think of the morrow with grateful happy feelings, as the festival which, excepting that of the Resurrection, they feel to be the most joyous of the year ; but previously to this all will have gone on as usual, and they will never be able to understand the tribute which Catholics pay to the holiday of Sunday, by relaxing from the austerities of the week, by a little social, though private, intercourse in the evening, after the morning devotions have been equal to the entire Sunday of any Protestant, however pious."

" Catholics," said the General, " do not drag about their sleepy devotion after the time appointed by the church, and therefore they are not acting a part they do not feel."

" And yet," said Geraldine, " a Protestant might say that much of the Catholic during these week days in Advent, which, though not so mournful as in Lent, are very solemn."

" They are solemn," said the General, " the

Church intends they should be so, and therefore, as you have seen, all the decorations of the altar are covered with the mourning garb of purple, and her children are directed to think of their sins, to repent of them, confess and make satisfaction for them; all which gives them occupation in exact keeping with the penitential season—while on the holy-days or Sundays, the commemoration being joyful, and the nature of joy being social, they are called on by the Church to rejoice in her own Catholic and social spirit. If the divine founder of our faith had not intended that our joys should be social, and our penitential hours silent and abstracted, why did he instance feasting, music, and dancing, on occasions of joy, and bid the spiritual mourner enter into his chamber and be still.”

“I have experienced,” said Geraldine, “the inconsistency, and, to a scrupulous conscience, the misery of being taught, that religious joy is anti-social—for the heart contradicts that opinion.”

“Let Protestants go through all the austerities and humiliations to which the Catholic Church obliges her children,” said the General, “before they attack her Sunday. Let them keep all her fasts before they quarrel with her feasts; and let them explain why the Church has had authority to change the Sabbath of the old law, with no warrant whatever for it from Scripture, and yet has no

authority to regulate the hours of the day, and permit the rest from mental as well as manual labour 'after the devotions of the morning.'"

"The meeting of relations on the evening of Sunday is relaxation sufficient, I should think," said Geraldine; "I shall never like to see cards or dancing on the Sunday evening."

"And yet," said the General, "you actually clapped your hands for joy, when on the sudden turn of the road on our journey, just before entering the little town of Tavernello, we beheld the peasants dancing on the other side of the bridge, and a couple of old ecclesiastics looking on, although a little apart."

"It was a beautiful picture," said Geraldine, "and more than that, it made me happy to see others happy, and so it ever will."

"Then your objection to dancing on the Sunday," said the General, "is, I conclude, more from your dread of the previous desecration that would take place, from the preparations thought essential to the entertainments of the great."

"I think you are right, Padrino," said Geraldine; "for although I might like to dance and make merry on the Sunday evening, I could never be reconciled to inducing servants to break the Sabbath by manual labour, which Catholics deprecate as much as Protestants. I have no scruple, however, about these little 'réunions' at the Contessa's,

where is neither feasting nor dancing, but a great deal of interesting conversation."

It was on one of these Sunday evenings, in Advent, that Geraldine met, for the first time, her celebrated countryman, the Rev. Dr. Wharton, and esteemed herself happy in being a listener to his varied and ever instructive conversation; and, at length, in being invited to speak freely to him on the subject of her own impressions of ancient and modern Rome. Geraldine, as she listened to his profound observations, both as a theologian and an antiquary, almost regretted that her usual shadow, Mr. Ellis, was not present, to have started his objections, in presence of an authority to which he must have yielded at least deference. A little reflection, however, made her esteem herself happy to be freed from controversy, and in the peaceful enjoyment of instruction given in all the playful ease of recreation.

On Dr. Wharton's mentioning the excavations beneath the city, Geraldine could not but express her regret that she had not been permitted to visit the Catacombs, and asked him whether he supposed them to have been originally destined for places of religious interment.

"The excavations beneath the city," replied Dr. Wharton, "were probably formed by supplying sand and other materials for the buildings above, and then put to no farther use by the Pagans, who

did not bury, but burnt, their dead, until the reign of Constantine; from which date the Christian mode became so popular, that in the time of Theodosius the younger, there was not a body burned in Rome."

"But how is it ascertained," said Geraldine, "that the Christians alone deposited their dead within these caverns, and that from the time when the Pagans imitated their decent interment of the dead, the Catacombs did not receive the bodies of Pagans as well as Christians, so that we may be led into venerating as relicks of Christian martyrs the remains of idolaters?"

"The Christian crypts," replied Dr. Wharton, "which are dug in the earth to a great extent, are known by the emblems and inscriptions found on the door of entrance, and also by the testimony of ancient Christian writers: amongst the rest, Saint Jerome relates, that when a boy and student at Rome, he was accustomed on Sundays to go into these crypts, which were lined on each side with the bodies of the Christian dead, and to make the round of the sepulchres of the apostles and martyrs. The Christian emblems and inscriptions placed in the Catacombs are frequently the monogram of Christ's name in a cross, a carved or painted figure of a lamb, often having a cross on its head,—the shepherd carrying the lost sheep,—the stag thirsting after the fountains of water,—and

others ; for instance, the olive or palm branch, the dove, the vine, the anchor. The first I have mentioned are the only symbols which are received as undoubtedly Christian, for these latter, although denoting certain virtues, are no proof of Christian martyrdom, or sanctity, and when discovered are decently re-interred without farther honour from the faithful. Those relics," continued Dr. Wharton, " which bear on the coffin the name of the martyr, hold the first rank ; next to these are esteemed the relics to which are affixed the symbols of martyrdom, together with the Christian emblems."

Just as Dr. Wharton finished speaking, Geraldine distinguished the voice of Mr. Ellis engaged in a laughing dialogue with an old Italian priest, who spoke admirable English, and who was generally to be found amongst the English Catholics in their private 'réunions.'

" But, my dear good Abate," said Mr. Ellis, at length able to articulate, after a fit of continued laughter, " how can you give me a satisfactory account of the two heads of Saint John Baptist, and the—I know not how many thumbs of Saint John the Evangelist, all and each performing miracles? Now, the false head and the false thumbs have no right to work miracles, yet their feats are quite equal to those of the true relics ; so that we require, as in the judgment of Solomon, to be decided by nature, and see the baptist and evan-

gelist claim their own property, before we can believe in either the relics, or the miracles. Perhaps," added he, "you are not aware that English Protestants, in their tours round the Catholic Continent, are shown these duplicates and triplicates of holy relics !"

"Yes," said the Abate, "I have before heard of these two heads of saints, but from Protestant travellers only, each supposed by its respective possessors to be the head of Saint John the baptist. Of course, supposing the account correct, one cannot be, and neither may be, the relic of that saint. But it is certain, that to whatever saints these relics belong, God has given power, through the intercession of Saint John the baptist, to cure diseases, and work other miracles, by means of these relics. The miraculous cures are certain. What matters then the uncertainty as to which, if either, of the heads belonged to Saint John the baptist, since both are blessed by God. The same may be said of the supposed relics of Saint John the evangelist."

"Most true," added Dr. Wharton to Geraldine, "as I have just been telling you, there are many relicks which are known, from the emblems on the coffins, to be those of martyrs, but to which of the martyrs they belong, we know not. These relics then receive the name of some saint; but hold only the second rank in the veneration of the faithful."

"But, sir," said Mr. Ellis approaching, "you must excuse me for doubting that St. John would take the trouble of performing wonders with any other head than his own, for which we may suppose him to retain some partiality; and I still more question the real owner of the head exerting himself to play those pious pranks, since all the renown and all the homage goes to another."

"Sir," replied Dr. Wharton, smiling, "this love of homage and renown, however much it existed amongst the fabled heroes and gods of antiquity, has no place in the communion of saints. That God may be glorified is their sole aim, and the real and supposed owner of the relics are equally interested in promoting that glory, by whatever means He shall in His hidden wisdom appoint."

"I have a precious relick, sir," said the Abate to Mr. Ellis, "which, I think, from your love of antiquity, you will prize; the relick of her in whom the blood of the Scipios, the Gracchi, and Paulus Emilius, was centered, through her mother, while, from her father, she was descended from Agamemnon, and married, as became such parentage, the descendant of Eneas."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Ellis, "here is a classical pedigree sufficient for the ambition of any high-born heroine, be she Greek or Roman."

The Abate now drew forth a little case enclosing

a silver reliquary, which contained the relick so precious to him; he would not, however, permit it to be touched by the hands of the scoffer, as he good-humouredly though seriously called him, but gave him the long account from the paper which enveloped it, of its authenticity, which, in honour of so many illustrious names, Mr. Ellis felt interested to read, and to which was affixed the seal of the pontiff. The Abate now placed the relick in the hand of our heroine, inquiring whether she had yet read the life of St. Paula, the spiritual daughter of the great St. Jerome?

Geraldine remembered that St. Paula had been the spiritual pupil of St. Jerome, and had passed all her latter years amid the scenes of our blessed Saviour's life on earth, and had finally fixed at Bethlehem, where she died. The date of this saint's career had also interested Geraldine, from its being in those primitive times in the Christian Church, which Protestants, as well as Catholics, term "holy," and also, from St. Paula having been amongst those Christians who had left Pagan Rome before the judgments denounced by St. John had fallen upon that city, "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her plagues," had been obeyed literally as well as spiritually, by crowds of voluntary exiles from Rome; while those of the Christians who remained, found safety within the two Christian churches, which were, by a

miraculous movement of mercy, respected as sanctuaries by the barbarous conqueror.

Geraldine related what she knew of the saint, whose relick she held, but she had forgotten the earlier part of her life, and, although she was correct with respect to the time of St. Paula's leaving Rome, it did not appear that she was repelled from the city on account of the approaching calamities, but, that she desired a separation from all she so tenderly loved by ties of nature, that she might live for God alone. The Abate described, with pious enthusiasm, the progress of Divine grace in the heart of this illustrious lady, first, moving her to doubt of the grandeur and luxury she had enjoyed, as innocent and becoming her station next, removing her beloved husband and daughter by death, and at length, attracting her from those dear objects who remained, by the superior force of Divine love.

Geraldine promised to read the life of this saint ; and the Abate promised, on his part, that if she felt sufficiently inspired by it to take St. Paula for her patroness and model, when she left Rome, he would give her his precious relick.

Geraldine, after this evening, which was the last 'réunion' of the season, did not see the Abate again till after the joyful commemorations of Christmas and the Epiphany. She then claimed the relick ; and after a due investigation of her right

to become its possessor, the Abate presented it with only one farther stipulation, that should she ever become a nun, she would take the name of "Paula."

"I am not yet sufficiently detached from creatures, and I have not yet seen enough of this beautiful, though fallen earth, to become a nun," said Geraldine, as she recalled the passing wish for that life, with which Angela De Grey had inspired her, but which had vanished at the sight of her father, and which had never returned to molest her present happiness.

"Almighty God may yet call you to be wholly his," said the Abate, "and if so, be thou faithful."

CHAPTER III.

What sudden blaze of song
Spreads o'er th' expanse of heav'n?
In waves of light it thrills along,
Th' angelic signal given;
"Glory to God," from yonder central fire,
Flows out the echoing lay beyond the starry quire.

Like circles widening round,
Upon a clear blue river,
Orb after orb, the wond'rous sound
Is echoed on for ever;
"Glory to God on high, on earth be peace
And love to men of love—salvation and release."

Keeble.

CHRISTMAS Eve in a Catholic church was well calculated to inspire our heroine with the tenderest sentiments of devotion. She would not permit a single regret, or it would have arisen at being obliged to kneel in a tribune, instead of being amongst the poor on such a night, when, rejected from the inn, the blessed Mary, in cold and poverty, gave to the world its Saviour in the rude stable of Bethlehem. It was the first time she had ever known of the three Christmas Masses,—the first at midnight, in honour of Christ's temporal birth from His sacred mother; the second, in

honour of His spiritual birth in the hearts of His Elect; and the third, in honour of His future Advent in glory.*

The first mass Geraldine heard and offered in preparation for holy communion, which, with her father she received at the second mass, the third was offered in thanksgiving. It was the first time also, that she had ever received the blessed sacrament with her beloved father, and joy of the holiest filial nature swelled her heart, and drew the silent tears down her cheek. This joy of her heart continued during a considerable time, to banish some vague but painful feelings, which had begun to take a more decided place in her mind, and of which the renewed sociabilities of the season, afforded a recurrence. Geraldine all but idolized her father, and much that was flattering to the human heart, was engaged in this devotion. She was proud of his martial air, his noble bearing, his rare but speaking smile, and the varied charms of his conversation. She also knew that she was the one object of his care and love; and that had she not been his daughter, he would still have given her his approbation. In truth, General Carrington was equally proud, as fond of his brilliant yet tender child, and this had seemed to be

* This is according to St. Bernard, but not exactly following the arrangement of the missal, the subject being of pious feeling merely, and not of precept.

strengthened by the circumstance which had threatened to weaken, if not destroy it, her becoming a Catholic. In the Catholic society, which they now enjoyed in Rome, the ardour of her religious feelings, and the previous learned investigation which authorized them, were spoken of by him, within her hearing, either with encomium, or with a smiling rebuke, which would invite the praise of others ; and she could scarcely comprehend how he could desire, that from being the interesting convert to the one only Church, caressed and applauded in the circle of Catholics at the soirées of the Contessa C—, she was, the same night, at the later parties of the Protestant leaders of the English fashionables, strictly to keep the secret of her conversion. In any other city, it would perhaps have been rare that the subject of religion should have been introduced into parties, formed merely for relaxation and amusement. But at Rome, the Church is everything ; and the idle and frivolous, having no other topic of conversation, must talk nonsense about things awful and mysterious. “His mind, then,” thought Geraldine, “the mind I have believed expanded to every noble and generous thought, can it be sullied and contracted by that false system of expediency, which confounds truth with falsehood ? She dared not investigate farther, but as we have said, preferred to dwell on the holy night of Christmas, and the re-assurance then given to her heart.

From Christmas until Lent, the social gaiety continued. The Leonard family were still in Rome, and, notwithstanding the little congeniality which existed on the most important points, there were motives to induce, not only intimacy, but friendship. General Carrington, and Colonel Leonard, had, in early life, been really attached to each other, and naturally desired that their families should cordially unite: scarce a week passed without their meeting, and the wonders of Rome were, of course, the most obvious topics of conversation, but which were rendered as hazardous as obvious from the sarcastic vein of the young Charles and his sister, and the indignant spirit of our heroine.

The aged Mrs. Leonard, however, from possessing more experience, and more humility, was less prone to ridicule all that she did not understand. The kind partiality that she felt for Geraldine, induced her to listen with attention to the explanations our heroine was ever willing to give.

It was on the morning of the 17th of January, the festival of Saint Anthony, that the latter had to sustain an attack, in which she was thankful to receive assistance from her friend the Abate.

“Oh! my dear Miss Carrington,” cried Miss Leonard, “we have just returned from the blessing of the horses, in the name of Saint Anthony! You never witnessed anything so absurd. There

were the poor animals, dressed out with ribbons, and finery of all kinds; and not only horses, but cattle of all descriptions: and there stood the poor monk, with an immense bucket of holy water near him, into which he was constantly plunging his brush, and then sprinkling and blessing till he was quite exhausted, with his little skull-cap off and on every instant: I would have given anything if you had been there!"

"I was there," said Geraldine, "and though you did not see our party, we saw yours behaving with great indecorum."

"Oh!" cried Augusta Leonard, throwing herself on the sofa, with fresh bursts of laughter, in which her brother joined, "who can forbear laughing at such folly?"

"It appears to me," said Geraldine, "that the greatest folly is this constant repetition of surprise at the consistent faith of the Church."

"But what good did all the blessing and sprinkling do the cattle, and their owners," said Miss Leonard, "when they left the good monk just as vicious and distempered, as when they came to him?"

"That is indeed begging the question," said Geraldine; "I do not believe that the cattle were so much so after the blessing as before. Do you remember the prayers we read together the other day,—on the ceremony of blessing the element of water?"

“I do not remember much about them,” said Miss Leonard.

“It is unfortunate,” said Geraldine, “that your memory should not serve you better, when you cast ridicule on others. You are so much accustomed to hear the words of the royal prophet, and of the three holy children, calling on things animate and inanimate to bless and extol their Creator, that you are not struck by it : but how much more incomprehensible is it to call on ‘beasts and cattle to bless God,’ than for God to bless them ? The same may be said of fire, air, earth and water, and all that are called upon to bless Him, who made them, and pronounced them good. And how can you say that the priest blessed the cattle in the name of St. Anthony, when you are quite acquainted with the invocation to the Holy Trinity in Latin, and your expert knowledge of Italian must have guided you to the rest ; repeated as it was so often, it was impossible not to learn and retain the priest’s blessing. ‘Per intercessionem Beati Antonii Abatis, hæc animalia liberantur a malis, in nomine Patris, et Filii et Spiritus Sancti. Amen.’ ‘Through the intercession of the blessed Abbot Anthony, may these animals be delivered from evil, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.’ ”

“My dear,” said Mrs. Leonard, “read me the prayers used by the Roman-Catholic church for

blessing the water. Do they mean to give a sort of inferior baptism to the animals, and cast out from them the curse entailed on these inoffensive creatures by man's transgression? If so, I can enter much more into the ceremony. I shall be better able to judge, however, after listening to you."

Geraldine fetched the Rev. Dr. Challoner's "Instructions on the Rites and Ceremonies of the Church," and read the form used for holy water.

"The priest having signed himself with the sign of the cross, saying, 'Our help is in the name of the Lord,' the reply being, 'Who made heaven and earth,' proceeds to the blessing of the salt, which is to be mingled with the water, saying,—

"I exorcise thee, O creature of salt, by the living ✝ God, by the true ✝ God, by the holy ✝ God: by that God, who, by the prophet Elisha, commanded thee to be cast into the water to cure its barrenness, that thou mayest by this exorcism be made beneficial to the faithful, and become to all them who make use of thee, healthful both to soul and body: and, that in what place soever thou shalt be sprinkled, all illusions and wickedness and crafty wiles of Satan may be chased away, and depart, from that place: and every unclean spirit commanded in His name, who is to come to judge the living and the dead, and the world by fire. Amen.'"

“My dear,” said Mrs. Leonard, “from what I understand of exorcism, this agrees perfectly with my notion, that the curse entailed by Adam’s fall on all creatures, requires to be removed before they can be ‘good,’ as God made them, and pronounced them to be.”

“Yes,” said Geraldine, “for is not exorcism the casting-out of evil spirits? and is not the permission of their evil agency the curse given on earth? I cannot presume to speak decidedly, but it seems to me, that I see clearly how the evil spirit has diffused itself over every thing, and must be cast out. Still, that would not be sufficient; the creature is then, it is true, no longer the conductor of evil, but, being merely harmless, cannot convey and direct blessing, unless the especial grace of God be diffused into it, and therefore, after the exorcism, the following prayer is used.

“‘O Almighty and everlasting God, we most humbly implore thy infinite mercy, that thou wouldst vouchsafe by thy goodness to bless ✠ and sanctify ✠ this thy creature of salt, which thou hast given for the use of mankind: that it may be to all that take it for the health of mind and body, and that whatever shall be touched or sprinkled by it, may be freed from all impurity, and from all assaults of wicked spirits, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.’”

“I conclude, my dear,” said the venerable lady,

“that this previous blessing of the salt is necessary before it is put into the water, but why cannot the simple element suffice?”

“Indeed I do not know,” said Geraldine; “but is not salt frequently spoken of in Scripture, literally as well as mystically, as preserving from corruption? Our daily experience proves the former, and would enable the faithful to lay up a store of it; while in its mystical sense, it was employed by the prophet Elisha, by the command of God, as we have just read. After this,” continued Geraldine, “the priest proceeds to the blessing of the water, first exorcising it thus:—

“‘I exorcise thee, O creature of water, in the name of God ✠ the Father Almighty, and in the name of Jesus Christ ✠ his son, our Lord, and in the virtue of the Holy ✠ Ghost: that thou mayest by this exorcism have power to chase away all the power of the enemy: that thou mayest be enabled to cast him out, and put him to flight, with all his apostate angels, by the virtue of the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who is to come to judge the living, and the dead, and the world by fire. Amen.’

“Then follows the prayer.

“‘O God, who for the benefit of mankind hast made use of the element of water in the greatest sacraments, mercifully hear our prayers, and impart the virtue of thy blessing ✠ to this element,

prepared by many kinds of purifications; that this thy creature, made use of in thy mysteries, may receive the effect of thy divine grace for the chasing away devils, and curing diseases: and that whatsoever shall be sprinkled with this water in the houses or places of the faithful, may be free from all impurity, and delivered from evil: let no pestilential spirit reside there: no infectious air: let all the snares of the hidden enemy fly away: and may whatever move the safety or repose of the inhabitants of that place be put to flight by the sprinkling of this water, that the welfare which we seek by the invocation of thy holy name, may be defended from all sorts of assaults. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, &c. Amen.'

"Then the Priest mingles the salt with the water, saying, 'May this salt and this water, be mingled together, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy ✠ Ghost. 'Amen.'

'The Lord be with you.'

'And with thy spirit.'

'Let us pray.'

"O God, the author of invincible power, king of an empire that cannot be overcome, and for ever magnificently triumphant; who restrainest the forces of the adversary, who defeated the fury of the roaring enemy, who mightily conquerest his malicious wiles: we pray and beseech thee, O Lord, with dread and humility, to regard with

favourable countenance this creature of salt and water, to enlighten it with thy bounty, and to sanctify it with the dew of thy fatherly goodness; that wheresoever it shall be sprinkled, all infestation of the unclean spirit may depart, and all fear of the venomous serpent may be chased away, through the invocation of thy holy name; and that the presence of the Holy Ghost may be everywhere with us, who seek thy mercy, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.'

" 'The blessing being ended, the priest sprinkles himself and the people with this water, saying, 'Thou shalt sprinkle me, O Lord, with hyssop, and I shall be cleansed; thou shalt wash me, and I shall be made whiter than snow.' The whole psalm 'Miserere' is then said: 'Have mercy on me O God, according to thy great mercy!' &c. followed by the 'Gloria Patri,' and the repetition of the anthem, 'Thou shalt sprinkle.' Then returning to the altar he says,—

V. 'O Lord show us thy mercy.'

A. 'And grant us thy salvation.'

V. 'O Lord hear my prayer.'

A. 'And let my cry come unto thee.'

V. 'The Lord be with you.'

A. 'And with thy spirit.'

'Let us pray.'

" 'Hear us, O Holy Lord, Almighty Father, everlasting God, and vouchsafe to send thy holy

angel from heaven, to guard, cherish, protect, visit, and defend, all that dwell in this habitation. Amen.'”

Just as our heroine finished reading the last prayer, Miss Leonard, who had retired, from weariness, into a farther room with her young brother, joined them again, on hearing the Abate Zaccaria announced; but her grandmother stopped her pleasantries, and informed her, that she saw no absurdity, nor superstition, in blessing cattle, houses, fire, water, or anything used by man especially: and both she and Geraldine appealed to the Abate to authorize this belief, if it were with a view to remove from them the curse on all creation. The Abate, nodding assent to this remark of Geraldine, here observed,—“The religious policy of our Holy Church, is to induce its members to mix up, with every business and occupation of life, the remembrance of the end for which they and all creatures were formed. Hence the pious Catholic hails these ceremonies, these blessings and thanksgivings over creatures, as mementos of the goodness of the God who gave them as aids to that spirit of inward recollection, that he is constantly striving to keep up, and as lessons of the use for which they were designed; bearing in mind the words of St. Paul, ‘For every creature is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.’”*

* 1 Tim. 4, 5.

“Pray, Abate,” cried Charles Leonard, “has the present Pope made many saints? Is he as fond of dubbing his knights spiritual, as our good king his knights temporal, God bless him?”

“I have been told,” said the Abate smiling, “that Protestants suppose us to believe, that the Pope can, by certain pious ceremonies, make a saint out of a sinner, and that the canonization of a saint is the act of sending him straight to heaven.”

“And what does it mean?” said Mrs. Leonard.

“The process of canonization,” said the Abate, “is the collecting from witnesses, proofs of holiness of life, and miraculous gifts, sufficient to authorize the belief that God has wrought the perfect sanctity of his servant, and received him into glory. It has caused the admiration and surprise of many learned Protestants, to witness the caution and rigour, with which these testimonies are examined. But that which, after the most laborious and rigorous examination, with continued prayer for the light of the Holy Spirit, is pronounced on by the Church tardily, and at long intervals, is decided at once with careless benevolence in the Protestant community. All who are not flagrant sinners go straight to heaven, all enter immediately into glory, all therefore are saints.”

After this day, our heroine had no prolonged discussions with any one during the gay season of the Carnival, and only some skirmishes occurred

between herself and her Protestant friends, at the numerous parties given by the English residents. In these scenes Geraldine was for awhile amused, but her former uneasiness again stole over her, although she would not own to herself that she had any cause for it, beyond her own too fondly engrossed affection for her father; till at length, a circumstance occurred by which it became evident to her, that he demanded a policy in her conduct which jarred against the open rectitude of her mind. In fact, General Carrington possessed that disposition which was the most calculated to mislead for awhile, and then deeply wound, the confiding, but inflexibly upright Geraldine. The grandeur of his speculations, the loftiness of his abstract decisions, the magnanimity of his theories, would make her heart expand with joy and gratitude, at the congeniality there existed between them; while the whispered confidential sentiments of timid policy—of expediency—of tricking a world that deserved no better—of flattering a fool that you might gain him—of keeping a friend as long as he was useful—and many other expressions which dropped from him at times when less on his guard, Geraldine received as a jest, or to raise some little amicable skirmish, in which he should prove her sentiments; and it was not until repeated proofs had been given her, that she opened her eyes to the want of moral courage, which had produced,

as it ever must, a want of moral integrity, in the character of her father.

And who can describe the desolation of Geraldine's heart, when it was forced to yield to the stern conviction of her understanding—when, after shrinking from the truth, it forced its imperative way—when she at length weighed his character in the balance, and it was found wanting ! Some hours passed of blank unmingled anguish, apart from any thought of herself ; but then arose the question of filial obedience for the future. “ I cannot deceive, even for his sake ; I cannot compromise the truth,—but am I then destined to stand alone ? ” thought she. “ Is the beautiful, the feminine, the humble virtue of obedience, which I have hitherto loved to exercise towards him, is that to be rendered a thing of doubt, of caution, of deliberate choice ? Am I to be once more the independant Geraldine ? Yes, be it so ! for, after long metaphysical enquiries, we must all return to the simple rudiments of our faith,—a Catholic child is taught in its early catechism, “ to obey its parents in all that is not sin.” Our primary duty is towards God—and God is truth.

That evening, Geraldine accompanied her father to a fête, given by the celebrated Italian banker, Torloni, where the company was almost entirely composed of English. Our heroine was pale and grave, but her father appeared to be entirely en-

grossed by the expected appointment, of which he had been long solicitous, to the —— Islands. He read aloud, while in the carriage, part of a letter from his friend Sir —— just received, through the English Ambassador's bag, giving all but a final answer, and added, as they ascended the staircase of the Conte Torloni's brilliantly illuminated palazzo, "Geraldine, you will see several of the English military to-night, and amongst them, General Sir Thomas Oskway, who is spoken of for this very appointment; remember, not a word about religion: let them continue to think me the same General Carrington they knew in Spain, which in truth I am;—a man is not bound to be the public crier of his private opinions. Do you hear me, Geraldine?"

"I do, papa," replied she. But she was not required to make any comment on what she heard, for they were now greeted in the first saloon of reception by the kind Contessa, who had taken care to arrive early; and the General, after many grateful acknowledgments, left his daughter to her charge.

This was the last party our heroine was compelled to attend; and from this time, till the season of Lent, General Carrington took his evening's amusement independently of her. Geraldine having obtained this favour, redoubled her endeavours to make her father's home agreeable to him,

and it was not until the Shrove Tuesday that anything occurred to wound her afresh.

On that evening they entertained a large party ; Geraldine tried to be happy, and certainly appeared so ; all was calculated to please the heart that had not known better and dearer joys ; but such was no longer the heart of Geraldine. At length the company dispersed, with the exception of a few Protestant English, and the night closed with much sportive anticipation of the " Papal shows " of Easter, and an especial display of wit on the subject of the Blessed Virgin and the saints, during which the General smiled, and our heroine, finding that she dared not explain or defend her faith, left the room, and retired to rest. In doing this she not only believed herself to be acting with discretion and prudence, but that her father would greatly applaud her : however, on the following day, after the solemn service of Ash Wednesday, when the private hours of penitential devotion, were over, and the one permitted repast had been taken, General Carrington reproved her for giving way to her feelings before Protestants ; assuring her that the best plan was to let them say and do exactly as they pleased ; that their folly could injure neither our Blessed Lady, nor the rest of the saints : " besides," added he, " I had my own reasons for wishing them to believe us to be like themselves, and so I still wish, if it be possible,

till the affair of the islands be settled. And for this reason, if Lady or Miss Oskway call on you during Lent, receive them cheerfully, and as one of themselves, and throw in your little jokes about miracles and relics of saints; they are innocent enough; a person may be a good Catholic without believing in any of these things. Will you do so, Geraldine?"

"For your sake, papa," said she, "I will not mention that you are a Catholic, and I will not, unless I am asked, say that I am one."

"But this is not enough," said the General.

"It is too much!" cried Geraldine, in one of her bursts of long-repressed emotion. "Did you imagine that in becoming a Catholic all the moral qualities of my character, and all the powers of my soul and intellect, would not become Catholic also? Did you hope to see me doubting, fearing, cringing, prevaricating before scoffers, when the glorious privileges of the Church were opened to me? That, enrolled by my baptism and confirmation into the communion of saints, I should admit them only on private occasions, and when secure from intrusion, as worldlings do their poor and shabby relations? If so, you may well be disappointed! English Catholics, of these days of pseudo-liberality, may expect me to forget that Jesus Christ promised his Church that her children should, in his name, and by his power, work

miracles even greater than those he had performed while on earth. They may hope that I shall give some ingenious turn to the conversation when these miracles are recounted—but no ! Silence is all I can yield to filial obedience. My father will not ask for *more !*”

Geraldine fell on her knees, and the General, who next to Protestant ridicule dreaded a scene, raised her kindly, soothed her with the assurance that he had only spoken in raillery, and a reconciliation was effected.

CHAPTER IV.

Gentiles ! with fix'd, yet awful eye,
Turn ye this page of mystery,
Nor slight the warning sound ;
Put off thy shoes from off thy feet,
The place where man his God shall meet,
Be sure is holy ground !

Hymns for Lent.—Keeble.

THE convert to Catholicity is asked, in sincere grief and astonishment, how any mind of real spirituality can adopt a religion so burdened with empty forms as the Catholic Church? But are those forms indeed empty? If so, no rational being would be burdened with them! Once, however, believing firmly that in each outward form is contained the inward spiritual gift, and there can be no torpor, no impatience felt in the external proofs of devotion and love rendered to his God by the fervent Catholic. Once believing truly in the sanctity of holy places, and that the divine blessing and the unseen ministry of the heavenly host do more especially attend the temples of the Deity, it is then no empty form which leads the Catholic to a daily attendance in

the house of prayer. Once in the full confidence of faith, believing that in the "daily sacrifice" offered up in commemoration of that once perfected on the cross, and in perpetual acknowledgment that without this our high priest, without this our holy victim, we are cast out, and our God is a consuming fire. Once believing that in this mystery our adorable Redeemer is miraculously present with us, and where, then, is the "empty form," to the pious Catholic, in the sacred service of the mass?

These had been our heroine's replies to the venerable Mrs. Leonard, whose concern at her having embraced a religion apparently less vital, pure, and interior than Protestantism, had led her to remonstrate against the change, and endeavour to reclaim her.

"This very temple—this basilica of St. Peter's," said Mrs. Leonard, "was it not for its erection that Leo X authorised the selling of indulgences, and aroused the mighty Luther? How can you feel ardour and devotion within its walls?"

"I do feel most truly and painfully in connexion with that subject," replied Geraldine; "for, alas! into what holy work has the enemy of souls not endeavoured to thrust himself, that he might mar the pure offering of man to his Creator? But I must, my dear friend, correct an error, which you, in common with many charitable and pious

Protestants, entertain, relying upon Protestant history, apparently trustworthy. The practice of commuting the canonical penances enjoined by the primitive Church, for alms-deeds, had long prevailed. Leo the Tenth granted an indulgence, which, you know, is not a pardon for sins, no more than it is a prospective permission to commit sin, to such as contributed to the erecting of the most magnificent temple ever raised to the honour of the Deity. That there were great and manifold corruptions in the lives of the clergy, and probably in the discipline of the Church, I readily admit, and, that a consequent falling off of piety prevailed among the laity, is proved, by their rapacity in seizing on Church property, and their readiness to embrace systems of faith, which showed a path to Heaven, less beset with restraint and self-denial. I would even admit, although no proof exists of the fact, that the authorised commissioners employed to dispense the indulgences, misrepresented their design and effect, for the sake of profit or influence, thus throwing disgrace on the seat of verity and apostolic descent, by selling, as it were, the spiritual gifts of the Church. And let us grant that it was thus—let us concede, that the warning to God's ancient people, the Jews, might have been applied to the rulers of His Christian Church. ‘Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His

face from you, that He will not hear.' We cannot then wonder, that, when corruption thus prevailed in the Church, reformers should arise to attack those abuses, and in this, I find them fully justified : would, that here they had stopped ! but, from the abuses, they proceeded to attack the faith of the Church, in which they were not justified. They sacrilegiously put their hand to the ark : and, thus it was, that, as in the revolt against the wilful Rehoboam, a second Jeroboam was permitted to arise, and call aloud, ' To your tents, O Israel ! ' and following this analogy, we cannot but perceive, first, in the instance of rebellion against the kingly power, that, although God permitted this scourge and punishment to befall the anointed king of Judah, yet His spirit accompanied not the ten tribes who revolted ; the Lord of glory was not born amongst them. They are still scattered and hidden, till the day of grace shall gather them in. While, to the two faithful tribes who remained steadfast, were sent the prophets : amongst them the miracles wrought : and, at length was heard, ' Arise ! shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee ! ' Thus may we consider God to have permitted a deserved rebuke and humiliation to His Catholic Church, in the bereavement of the northern nations : the estrangement, contempt, and even hatred, of the ' tribes ' who have revolted against her. Yet has her Divine

spouse not deserted her : with her alone remains the mystery of His real presence : with her alone are His miracles wrought : and to her alone can be applied, ‘ Behold, I will make thy enemies to come and adore before thy feet, and they shall know that I have loved thee.’ ”

During the early part of Lent, Geraldine had been occupied in gleaning from works lent her by the Rev. Dr. Wharton, and the Abate Zaccaria, all that could throw light and interest on the approaching solemn commemorations, and she was therefore now still better enabled to understand and appreciate those attendant ceremonies, which to the superficial observers must be tedious, and to the prejudiced Protestant, mere empty form and idle show.

On the eve of the fifth Sunday in Lent, which is the fortnight before Easter, commenced the commemorative history, or mystical representation of our blessed Redeemer’s sufferings. The ornaments in all the Churches were either covered or removed, and the crosses veiled with the mournful and penitential covering of violet.*

In early times the catechumens who had been found worthy, were baptized on the eve of Easter,

* The author is principally indebted for the following descriptions to the Right Reverend Dr. England’s explanations of the ceremonies of the holy week.

and admitted, on the glorious day of the resurrection, to the adorable sacrament of the risen body, soul and divinity of Christ. Those also who had been excluded from the blessings of the altar, and compelled to do public penance for public crimes,—the rest of the faithful likewise, who by fasting, prayer, and alms, had sought reconciliation through the sufferings and death of Christ, and expected to be joyful partakers of his resurrection, by the channels of grace he has appointed,—all felt the increased solemnity of the near approach of the awful commemorations.

This first day of Passion week, (which is the week preceding Holy week, and not, as in the Protestant Church, synonymous with it), General Carrington accompanied his daughter to the early mass, as well as to that which he had always attended with her. And this additional devotion he continued during the interval between Passion week and Easter. On Palm Sunday, he accepted, for his daughter and himself, the privileges obtained through Cardinal W—, by which they could see and hear, in a tribune near the high altar of St. Peter's, and also in the Sistine or Pope's Chapel, all the ceremonies of the week.

“You are aware, Geraldine,” said the General, on their way to the Sistine chapel, at an early hour on Palm Sunday, “that his Holiness is the

representative of Christ, as Prophet, Priest, and King, and that while as a temporal prince, he has a court as head of the Church, his court is composed of priests. This is peculiar to Christian Rome. Such a thing was unknown before upon earth."

"It is," said the Abate Zaccaria, who accompanied them, "more in the order of heaven than earth, that a court should be filled by men consecrated to God. Every thing that Madamizella will see, will be with reference to the union of Priest and Sovereign."

"I think," said the General, "that you have one exception to the levee-room of priests. The Pope's lawyer must be of the laity."

"Yes," said the Abate, "but he sanctifies his secular business by the heavenly attribute of mercy, for he and all the papal lawyers furnish gratuitous service for the poor, the prisoners, and those under capital conviction."

They had now arrived at the chapel, where Geraldine felt most grateful that she was not to remain in the crowd of the merely curious English, who, with many jokes, were pushing towards the places allotted to them; but were soon quietly seated in the reserved tribune, with the Contessa and her father, and engaged in reading over in the missal the beautiful service which was to com-

mence within an hour. The object of the ceremony was to commemorate our Lord's triumphal entry into Jerusalem, when the multitude received Him with palm-branches, emblematical of victory, and with olive-branches, the type of peace ; and a pile of these were on the gospel side of the altar, to be blessed before being distributed, according to the undeviating practice of the Church, to "sanctify by the word of God, and by prayer," everything that her children use in the service of their God. This custom of blessing and distributing the palms, and of forming a procession on Palm Sunday, is of very ancient observance ; and was first celebrated in the East, on the same principle which Almighty God himself taught to the Hebrew people, on the commemoration of their deliverance from Egypt : "And when thy son shall ask thee to-morrow, saying, what mean these testimonies, and ceremonies, and judgments, which the Lord hath commanded us ? then shalt thou say to him : We were bondsmen of Pharaoh in Egypt, and the Lord God brought us out of Egypt with a strong hand ; and he wrought signs and wonders, great and very grievous in Egypt, against Pharaoh, and all his house, in our sight ; and he brought us from thence that he might bring us in, and give us the land concerning which he swore to our fathers : and the Lord commanded that we should do all these ordinances, and should fear the Lord

our God.”* On this principle were all the other commemorative festivals and solemnities of the Jewish Church; and, therefore, on the same principle has the Christian Church, by virtue of the power given her by Christ, instituted her festivals and solemnities commemorative of His blessed life and death.

The choir of the Sistine chapel now commenced the hosanna of the children of Jerusalem, “Blessed is he who cometh in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!” The prayer which followed from the altar, besought the grace of God to bring us to the glory of Christ’s resurrection; and the subdeacon then chaunted from Exodus the history of the murmurs of the children of Israel after they had left the palm-trees and fountains of Elim—their longing after the fleshpots of Egypt, where they were in bondage—and the promise which the Lord gave them of manna; the Church having selected this portion of Scripture, to mark to her children, how, in the midst of God’s mercies and favours, in delivering us from the bondage of sin, we are disheartened, and murmur at the loss of past enjoyment, and would fain return to the slavery of Satan, did not the grace of God sustain us in the desert of this world by the “true manna” which comes from heaven, enabling us to behold His glory. Before the gospel from St. Matthew,

* Deut. vi. 20, &c.

which was sung by the deacon, recording the triumphal entry of Jesus Christ into Jerusalem, as the royal descendant of David, and King of the nations, the gradual gives the mournful announcement of the machinations of the chief priest and Pharisees against Him ; and also, by anticipation, three verses from the prayer and agony in the garden. Beautiful and appropriate prayers followed the gospel, during which the blessing, sprinkling, and incensing, of the palms and olive-sprigs, takes place ; and then began the distributing them previous to the procession.

The cardinals first advanced in succession to the throne of the pontiff, kissing the palms as they received them, and the hand of the holy father. They were succeeded by the patriarchs, archbishops, and bishops, wearing their mitres. The mitred abbots of religious orders next advanced, who kissed the foot of the pontiff ; and thus did the vast numbers who succeeded them.

During this distribution, the choir performed the proper anthems in plain chant. In some parts, the voices of children uttered the hosannas and blessings of the infant band of Jerusalem ; and this unexpected and touching admission of those “ babes, in whose mouth God hath perfected his praise,” was truly in accordance with the blessed spirit of Catholic communion.

As the procession began, Geraldine remarked with surprise, in the midst of this commemorative rejoicing, that the cross, borne at the head of the procession, was veiled; but she concluded, and she was right, that, like the mournful verses of the gradual, the cross was covered to denote the approaching passion and death of the Son of God. The procession was most striking and imposing. The pontiff, as king and priest, was borne on a seat carried by twelve supporters, under a canopy held by priests. The heads of religious orders, with other ecclesiastics, followed his holiness, and closed the procession, the choir singing from the gospels the event commemorated. The "Sala Reggia," round which the procession passed, was lined with the city guards, and directly the pope entered the hall, the guard of nobles surrounded his throne, and the gates of communication with the chapel were closed. The chanters who remained within the chapel with the congregation, and the choir who were accompanying the procession, then sang alternately the beautiful verse of the hymn "Gloria, laus et honor;" and the procession having returned to the closed doors, the cross-bearer struck with the staff of the cross to gain admittance; and the procession entered, singing the verse "When the Lord entered into the holy city," &c. Solemn high mass commenced di-

rectly the holy pontiff had returned to the sanctuary, which was celebrated by a cardinal priest. The portion of the gospel selected for this mass is St. Matthew's history of the passion of our Lord, and the manner in which it is always chanted on these solemn occasions is according to the ancient mode of reciting tragedy. The historical recital is by a tenor voice; the words of the subordinate persons are given by a counter-tenor; and our Saviour's expressions by a bass voice; the choir singing the words spoken by the crowd. During this gospel, although the palm branches are still held in honour of Christ's victory over sin and death, no lights are borne; and when it is recited that he bowed down his head and gave up the ghost, all knelt or prostrated, for some moments, in deep humiliation and solemn adoration of Him, who, for our sakes, thus underwent the sorrows of death.

The beautiful hymn of the "Stabat Mater" was sung at the offertory of this mass, and this plaintive appeal to share in the sorrows of the mother of Jesus, following so immediately, as did the gospel, on His triumph, touched more directly the chord of human sympathy.

It was some time after the conclusion of the service, when the Abate Zaccaria joined our friends in the tribune, according to promise. He

bore two beautiful little branches of palm and olive united, which with great care he had selected from those blessed by his holiness; and giving them to our heroine, bade her keep them with respect, not only as memorials of the great event that day commemorated, but also precious in themselves, although inanimate, having received the especially invoked blessing of Heaven, for the use of the faithful.

CHAPTER V.

Thou framer of the light and dark,
Steer through the tempest thine own ark :
Amid the howling wintry sea
We are in port, if we have thee.

Ah, by thine own sad burthen borne,
So meekly up the hill of scorn,
Teach thou thy priests their daily cross
To bear as thine, nor court its loss.—*Keble*.

DURING the two following days, General Carrington and his daughter attended their accustomed early mass, and were each occupied with the devotions appropriate to this holy and mournful week in private ; but on the evening of Wednesday their friend, the Abate, was again with them by appointment, and they together went to the Sistine chapel, to attend the office of “Tenebræ,” which, as its name obviously implies, was intended to be celebrated in the darkness of night. The Abate felt assured, and Geraldine could not differ from him, that the Tenebræ of Wednesday was not the vigil, but the matins and lauds of Maundy Thursday, chanted directly after midnight by most of the religious orders, till a mitiga-

tion was allowed to some, of deferring the nocturns till the office of lauds at daybreak, and to others of chanting the office over night.

“ From the days of the apostles,” said the Abate, “ the Church has prescribed for her clergy a divine office, that is, a duty of attendance upon the Lord : this duty is prayer. Amongst the ancients the night was divided into four watches, and the day into four stations : so that the military who were appointed to the guard duty relieved each other at the termination of each watch or station. The Church militant of Christ imitated the vigilance and zeal of the soldiery of the earthly monarch. Like David, our fervent Christians arose at midnight to give praise to the Lord. Pliny the younger, Lucian, and Ammianus Marcellinus, mention the custom of the Christians of watching and singing at midnight ; and Lactantius tells us they did so to prepare for the arrival of their king and God. But it appears, from St. John Chrysostom, that the laity were not called to these night offices, except on Sundays and other solemn occasions. In the monasteries only, and amongst the clergy, “ the course,” as it was termed, was regularly performed : and as the canons regulated the time, and manner of its performance, the hours, and subsequently the office, was known by the appellation of the “ Canonical Hours.”

Geraldine remembered, and repeated to the

Abate from the "*Mores Catholici*," "How holy is the Catholic night, the night of the middle ages, the time in which saints, dispersed all over the earth, are assembled to chant the same sacred hymns, and to commemorate the same great deliverance."

"Beautiful as true," said the Abate; "the faithful used especially to assemble at midnight, for the nocturns of Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, of Holy Week, but for some centuries, the office has been celebrated on the preceding evening; for thus it was in the early habits of our predecessors, though to us moderns, it is the afternoon of our day."

"There is a difference of opinion, I believe," said the General to his daughter, "respecting the reason for extinguishing the candles, one after another. Some informing us, that the candles, which are ranged along the sides of the triangle, represent the patriarchs, and prophets, who, under the law of nature, and the written law, gave the world the light of that partial revelation which they had received, and then died; the last being St. John the Baptist, while the Saviour, who was not extinguished by his temporary death, is represented by the remaining light, which is carried to the back of the altar, and concealed; during which the prayer is in mournful and respectful silence, the psalm beseeching mercy (*Miserere*), is sung, the last petition is made, and the convulsions of nature at the Saviour's death, are commemorated

by the overthrow of stones and other heavy weights behind the altar. Do you incline to their interpretation, Signor Abate, or to that which is more generally received, of the candles representing the burning light of faith in the apostles, which in the hour of trial was extinguished, and that all left their lord and master, save our blessed lady, who is represented by the concealed but still burning light?"

"I incline to the former exposition," said the Abate; "but there is something peculiarly mournful and touching in the last view of the subject, and it seems to be the most popularly received. I fear," continued he, "that the Signora will find the service tedious; for the nocturns are chanted in the most simple and ancient style, every ornament being omitted, that might distract the mind from the mournful tribute due to this commemoration of Him, who was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with infirmity."

"I shall not, by the blessing of God, find the *Tenebræ* service tedious," said Geraldine; "and I have been told that the recitation of the 'Lamentation,' which preceeds the far-famed 'Miserere,' is most affecting in its appeal to the heart."

"It is so," said the Abate, "and after the mournful dwelling of one voice upon the few wild notes of the continued lamentation, the effect is truly fine of the harmony at the close; 'Jerusalem! Jerusalem! return thou to the Lord thy God.'"

Geraldine did not find the service tedious, for her mind and heart were occupied. The one voice in the Lamentation, with the irresistibly moving chorus, as the Abate had described it, was the more striking, from her never having heard before that species of chant. Nothing, however, to which she then, or had ever listened, could approach the effect produced on her whole being, when, after an impressive pause, the unearthly strain arose of the "Miserere !" The consciousness of place and of time was lost ! That she now heard the wail of departed spirits, from the prison of their purification, was the most defined of her feelings, and this impression strengthened as the strain continued, till she found herself in mental aspirations for their admittance into the angelic choir, to which their voices seemed already attuned. As the sounds died away, the pontiff read, in a low impressive voice, the concluding prayer ; and when he paused, the light by which he had read disappeared, while the last and most exquisite harmony arose in deeper, more intense supplication, and loud strokes, which reverberated through the chapel, commemorating the veil of the temple being rent in twain, closed in deep awe the service.

In the primitive ages of the Church, it was customary to bring public penitents before the bishop, after matins on Holy Thursday ; and after the penitential psalms, with appropriate prayers and

litanies, had been said or sung, they received the first absolution; and after tierce, (the third, and our ninth hour), they were reconciled, by a second absolution, to the favour of the Church. Formerly, in the church of Salisbury, the arch-deacon besought the bishop, in the name of the penitents at the church-door, to admit them to favour, and the ceremony must have been most edifying; but in these days of pride, and self-love, the conditions for gaining the indulgence of the Church, are of a far less humbling nature. It was usual to celebrate three masses on Maundy Thursday: at the first, public penitents were reconciled; at the second, the oils were consecrated for the sacraments throughout the year; and the third was celebrated with more than usual solemnity, in honour of our blessed Saviour's having, on that day, instituted the commemoration of his death, in the sacrifice of the mass, and the sacrament of the holy Eucharist. At this last-mentioned mass, it is customary in cathedrals, for all the attendant clergy to go to communion, when, as they receive sacramentally, and not in sacrifice, they receive under one kind only.

In gratitude and joy for this great gift to the Church, she mitigates on this day some of the mournful observances of the week, and the ornaments of the altar are veiled with white instead of purple. At the mass of this day the "Gloria in

Excelsis" is sung, and the bells, which have been silent since Septuagesima Sunday, are rung during this hymn of joy, and likewise at the Papal Benediction; but, with these exceptions, they remain silent, in token of mourning, and wooden clappers are substituted, to call the faithful to their religious duties. On this day (Maundy Thursday) no kiss of peace is given at the altar, in abhorrence of the kiss by which Judas betrayed his Lord. The celebrant consecrates two particles of the sacred Host; one to be offered in commemorative sacrifice, and received in communion as usual at mass, the other to be reserved for the office of Good Friday, when no consecration takes place. The sacred Host thus kept, has been ever, with respect and awe, deposited in a suitable place, and for ages has been carried thither in procession: this being the anniversary of its institution by Him, who, when about to terminate His mortal life of sufferings, left us this pledge of His love. The procession now formed in the same order as that on Palm Sunday, with this striking difference, that, whereas the pontiff had, on the preceding occasion, been borne in triumph, he now humbly walked bare-headed, carrying the sacred Host, while incense was burned before it, and lights were held in its honour by all in the procession, which moved from the 'Sala Reggia,' into the Pauline chapel. Both the hall and the chapel were in a blaze of light. The

instant the holy father had reverently received the ciborium from the altar, containing the sacred Host, the sacramental hymn of the "Pange Lingua" had commenced :

PANGE LINGUA.

" Sing, my tongue ! in raptures sing
The mysteries of the world's great King ;
His glorious flesh, and saving blood,
Given in love to be our food ;
That blood, which in his torments flowed,
To ransom sinful man bestowed.

Bestowed by Heaven on sinful earth,
A spotless virgin gave Him birth ;
And while He lived, He scattered wide
His word's true seed on every side,
And left rich pledges of His love,
Ere He resumed His throne above.

Surrounded by His faithful few
That evening of His last adieu,
And fully kept the sacred rite
Ordained for that eventful night ;
For food, He gave Himself, to prove
A sweet remembrance of His love."

The procession having now reached the Pauline chapel, the choir continued :

" The word of solemn mystery said,
To Christ's own flesh converts the bread ;
The wine, the Almighty's voice has heard,
His blood is present at the word ;
And faith, though sense will fail us here,
Suffices to the heart sincere."

When the Pontiff had arrived at the altar of the Pauline chapel, a cardinal deacon, receiving on

his knees the sacred treasure, conveyed it to the depository prepared for it; which the sacristan having locked after the pontiff, still kneeling with his cardinals, had incensed the blessed Sacrament, the key was given to the priest who was to celebrate on the following day, and who was the Cardinal Grand Penitentiary. During this last ceremony, the concluding verses of the hymn, beginning "Tantum ergo," were sung.

"Let us profoundly bend before
This awful mystery, and adore;
Let types of former days give way,
Like darkness at the blaze of day,
And sense's failure be supplied
By faith, our firm support and guide.

To God the Father, God the Son,
His equal, sole-begotten one;
And to the Holy Ghost, we raise
Our hymns of jubilee and praise;
Salvation, power, and glory be
To God, who reigns eternally."

The procession, then, instead of returning to the Papal chapel, proceeded to the loggier or gallery, in front of the church of St. Peter's, the holy father being again borne in state to give his apostolic blessing to the assembled multitude. Many rushed from the Sistine chapel to witness this imposing sight, but our heroine had been promised not only to witness, but also to partake of the blessing on Easter Sunday, and therefore, had listened to the advice given her, not to attempt to

see everything and enjoy nothing, and now quickly accompanied her father and the Contessa, to the 'Sala della Lavanda,' to see the ceremony of the holy father washing the feet of his priests. By this arrangement they arrived in time to secure seats just opposite the expected scene, and, before the entrance of his holiness, the Abate joined them, and whispered to Geraldine, that he concluded she was aware that the interior disposition must accompany the outward action to render it acceptable to Almighty God; and, that no one gave more edification, by the fervour and simplicity of his humility, than did his present holiness. "If the Signora, in common with her fair countrywomen, has been disposed to scoff or been offended at seeing the chief bishop receive the tribute of respect of kissing his foot, she will now be pleased in seeing him kiss the feet of others."

As the Abate spoke, the holy father, with his retinue, entered the hall, and the whole company knelt, until he had extended his hand in token of benediction, when they arose, and a cardinal deacon having received the especial blessing before singing the gospel, the twelfth of St. John was chanted, the choir first singing the versicle, "Mandatum novum da nobis." The pontiff's cope and breastplate were then taken off, and he was clad in the alb, and girt with a towel of fine cloth. The holy father then proceeded to where the thirteen

priests were seated, attended by his deacons, who bore the utensils, towels, &c., used by the pontiff. He knelt and washed the right foot of each priest, which, having dried, he kissed. A medal of gold, and one of silver also, were then given to each priest, together with the embroidered towel.

After this, in another hall, his holiness waited on the same thirteen priests at their repast.

In the evening of this day, Geraldine was taken by her father to see the blazing cross of fire suspended within the dome of St. Peter's. The whole of the immense fabric was thronged with people, of every age, clime, and condition, gazing on that glorious object, and the pontiff and all the cardinals now descended from the Sistine chapel, where they had been attending the service of *Tenebræ*, room having been kept for them by the Swiss guards. Silence, holy silence, reigned throughout the whole church,—even the whispering and tittering of the English Protestant ladies ceased for a short time, while the pontiff and all around him lay prostrate before the symbol of Redemption. But at the exposition of the sacred relics, which soon after took place, General Carrington, being tormented by the unbecoming behaviour of the English groups near him, drew Geraldine away, and they drove immediately to the church of Sant' Antonio de' Portoghesi, to visit the blessed sacrament there deposited; and as this visit was unexpected to our heroine, and

made, as she supposed, by her father from simple devotion, the effect was still more impressive, of the resplendent repository of the sacred Host, which poured forth a flood of light, reflected on all sides of that small but exquisitely beautiful church. General Carrington and his daughter joined the prostrate congregation in silent prayer, till, touching her on the arm to arise and look around her, he led her in a short time back to the carriage, where he told her that, if she wished it, he would take her that evening to a sacred concert, held at the house of an Italian lady, where she would hear the "Miserere" to perhaps even greater advantage than in the Sistine chapel, as there would be an instrumental accompaniment of the finest harmony.

"How richly must I be feasting," said Geraldine, "to feel no wish for this sacred concert, which would once have been, indeed, a treat. I shall, however, be happy to be with you, dearest father, if you are going."

"No," said the General, "I have no inclination for this concert but for your sake ; I will, therefore, order them to take us home, and you shall go early to rest."

On their return to the palazzo, and before Geraldine had retired, the Abate called, scarcely expecting to see them, as he concluded they had gone to the sacred concert. He was much pleased to find that Geraldine had visited the sepulchre in

the church of St. Antonio, as he gave it the preference, but was a little disappointed to find her so unusually silent.

“Is the Signora disappointed?” said he.

“I am only disappointed, or rather perplexed,” replied she, “at the anticipation of time, which disturbs my devotion, and must continue to do so: for instance, Signor Abate, you and every one term the place in which the blessed sacrament is deposited ‘the sepulchre,’ and I understand that the figure of our blessed Lord is often represented lying in the tomb to which the sacred Host is carried on this Maundy Thursday. Why do you represent the burial of our Saviour before his death? Why is not Holy Saturday the day appointed for guarding the sepulchre?”

“After the mass of Maundy Thursday,” replied the Abate, “the blessed sacrament is carried from the altar, which is stripped of all its ornaments, to represent the desolation of the Church, at the loss of her divine spouse, for it was on the night of Maundy Thursday, that our Lord was betrayed and taken. The faithful have been in the constant habit of following their hidden Lord to the depository in which the blessed sacrament is placed, to pay their homage; and this custom has fallen in so naturally with the idea of his lying hidden in the sepulchre, that by degrees that name has been given to the receptacle, and the two pious acts have become blended.”

CHAPTER VI.

Is it not strange the darkest hour,
That ever dawned on sinful earth,
Should touch the heart with softer power
For comfort than an angel's mirth ?
That to the cross the mourner's eye should turn
Sooner than where the stars of Christmas burn ?

Yet so it is, for duly there
The bitter herbs of earth are set;
Till, tempered by the Saviour's prayer,
And with the Saviour's life-blood wet,
They turn to sweetness, and drop holy balm,
Soft as imprisoned martyr's death-bed calm.

Hymn for Good Friday.—Kelle.

NOTHING could surpass the look of grief and desolation in the papal chapel, on the morning of Good Friday. The altar was stripped, the sanctuary without a carpet, the benches and the throne uncovered, the vestments of the pontiff, cardinals, and subordinate priests, were of mourning hue; and on their entrance they lay prostrate in silent prayer before the altar, on which a simple cloth was spread, while the lesson was chanted from the prophet Hosea : “ ‘ Thus saith the Lord, ‘ In their affliction they will rise early to me. Come and

let us return to the Lord, for he hath taken us, and he will heal us, he will strike and he will cure us. He will revive after two days. On the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight. We shall know and shall follow on, that we may know the Lord. His going forth is prepared as the morning light, and he will come to us, as the early and the latter rain to the earth. What shall I do to thee, O Ephraim ! What shall I do to thee, O Judah ! your mercy is as a morning cloud, and as the dew that goeth away in the morning. For this reason have I hewed them by the prophets. I have slain them by the words of my mouth, and thy judgments shall go forth as the light, for I desired mercy and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than holocausts." The lesson read for the epistle, was from Exodus, relating to the institution of the passover, which prefigured the death of the Redeemer ; and after the tract, followed the gospel of the passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to St. John ; after which, on this commemoration of the great day of expiation for the sins of all mankind, followed prayers "for the whole Church, for the holy pontiff, as its visible head, for all bishops, priests, deacons, and degrees of the clergy, for confessors, virgins, widows, and all other congregated portions of the faithful, for temporal sovereigns, for catechumens ; also to beseech the removal of error, of

disease and famine, for the liberation of captives, the safe return of travellers by sea or land, for the grace of conversion and mercy for all heretics and schismatics, for the Jews and Pagans ;” from which beautiful collects, Geraldine perceived had been formed the “general prayer” in the Church of England liturgy, for all sorts and conditions of men. At the conclusion of these prayers, the officiating priest, who on this occasion was the cardinal grand-penitentiary, putting off his chasuble, partially uncovered the crucifix, beginning the anthem, “*Ecce lignum crucis*,” Behold the wood of the cross ! on which hung the Saviour of the world ; the choir responding, “Come let us adore !” This was repeated three times, as the celebrant disclosed by degrees the whole of the crucifix ; and the pontiff having risen from the third genuflection at the uncovering the cross, and having laid aside his shoes and cope, descended from his throne, when his mitre being also removed, he knelt in homage, and again, as he advanced to kiss the cross, knelt twice. The choir then chanted those affecting passages termed “Reproaches,” and at the end of each the reply was given in Greek and Latin : “O my people, what have I done to thee, or in what have I afflicted thee, answer me ? Because I led thee out of the land of Egypt, thou hast prepared a cross for thy Saviour ?”

Response. “O holy God,—O holy and powerful,—O holy immortal one,—have mercy on us !”

“Because I led thee out through the desert for forty years, and fed thee with manna, and brought thee into a land exceedingly good, thou hast prepared a cross for thy Saviour! What more ought I to do for thee, and have not done it? I planted thee indeed, my most beautiful vineyard, and thou art become to me exceedingly bitter, for thou hast given me vinegar in my thirst, and with a spear thou hast pierced the side of thy Saviour.”

The chorus answer in turn the Greek and Latin as before.

“For thy sake I scourged Egypt with its first-born, and thou didst scourge me, and deliver me up. I led thee out of Egypt, drowning Pharaoh in the Red Sea, and thou didst deliver me to the chief priests.

“Before thee I opened the sea, and thou didst open my side with a spear.

“I went before thee in a pillar of cloud, and thou didst lead me to the judgment hall of Pilate.

“I fed thee with manna through the desert, and thou didst strike me with blows and scourges.

“I gave thee to drink the water of salvation from the rock, and thou gavest me gall and vinegar.

“For thee I struck the kings of the Canaanites, and thou didst strike my head with a reed.

“I gave thee a royal sceptre, and thou didst give to my head a crown of thorns.

“I lifted thee up with great power, and thou didst hang me upon the gibbet of the cross.”

The whole chorus then sang,—

“O my people what have I done to thee, or in what have I afflicted thee?” followed by the Anthem.

“We adore thy cross, O Lord, and praise and glorify the holy resurrection, for by this word came joy into the whole world.

“May God have mercy on us, and bless us; may he cause the light of his countenance to shine upon us, and have mercy on us.”

Then followed the hymn in honour of the cross, beginning “*Crux fidelis*,” during which, the candles were lighted on the altar, and the procession, which had conveyed the sacred Host to the tabernacle of the Pauline chapel, on the preceding day, now fetched it thence, and the cross being borne before it uncovered, and raised in triumph, the choir sang the hymn “*Vexilla Regis*.”

The sacred service of the mass then proceeded, the Mass of the Presanctified, so called from the host having been consecrated on the previous day. Vespers immediately followed, and the altar was then stripped as before, and the door of the tabernacle left open, to show that its glory and treasure was gone !

Has the reader known what it is to revisit a room, endeared by many fond and holy remem-

brances ; endeared still more in hours of sickness, and furnished with sufficient for the mind and heart, even when the lifeless form of the loved one lay within it ; to revisit it when all was gone ; and the exposure of the once private apartment,—doors, windows, all thrown open, and the removal of all that had served the owner, told that he was indeed dead ? if so, he would have felt with Geraldine, as at the door of the chapel she looked back on the sanctuary, that nothing could equal the effect of its desolation, in conveying the impression of death,—of death ! who then was dead ? the world's Redeemer ! Be hushed in awe ye mortals !

“ Are you ill, my love ? ” said the General, as he followed her into the carriage.

“ No, dear father,” replied she, “ but throughout the remainder of this day, and to-morrow, I should wish to watch and pray in some church where the holy sepulchre is represented.”

The General looked at his watch : “ It is you who are now anticipating, Geraldine,” said he, “ for the hour of the crucifixion is only just at hand, and the three hours' agony on the cross, is now about to be commemorated, in several of the churches. I could take you, but that I fear you would be overcome, and perhaps disagreeably so, by the vehemence of Italian feeling, both on the part of the preacher, and of his audience. We quiet English are rather repelled than attracted by such violent emotions.”

“ I should like to be in some church or chapel,” said Geraldine, “ during these three hours ; and I can sympathize in true fervour, however contrasted, in outward expression, from the national reserve to which I have been accustomed.”

The General then gave orders to be driven to the nearest church, but found every entrance blocked up by earnest expectants of the solemn and mournful commemoration. He then thought of applying at the sacristy for a seat for Geraldine, when one of his Italian servants, who had been watching for them at the portico of the Sistine chapel, but had missed them, came with a message from the Abate Zaccaria, to say, that if the signora wished to attend “ *le tre ore*,” at the church of St. Andrea delle Tratte, a chair would be kept for her ; and they accordingly hastened thither, where Geraldine, after much labour on the part of two kind ecclesiastics, reached the seat reserved for her ; and the General, having promised to take charge of her when all should be over, had not followed into the dense mass of people, but remained in the portico. Our heroine had not been prepared for the all but dramatic representation of the awful scene of Calvary ; and when, on raising her head from her silent prayer to look towards the sanctuary, she beheld the figure of our blessed Redeemer between the two thieves, so admirably wrought that nature seemed to have taken the

place of art, she gasped for breath, and then dropping her face on her hands, mentally ejaculated, "this is too much!" At that instant, the first of the seven sacred sayings of Christ on the cross was solemnly given by a priest, accompanied by a set commentary on them. The first sentence was, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do!" and a young Dominican friar, with a tide of fervent eloquence which bore away all coldness and criticism, burst in upon the commentary, and had won over our heroine to feel as if among the living witnesses of the dying agonies and dereliction of her God,—when the preacher paused, and three strophes of the "Stabat Mater dolorosa" were sung, during which he rested from his exertions; and then again, a priest from the sanctuary having given forth the second sentence of, "To-day thou shalt be with me in paradise," the friar, with renewed power, and the irresistible force of sincerity, continued. The third sentence is addressed to the blessed Virgin,—“Woman, behold thy son!” and to St. John,—“Behold thy mother.” The fourth,—and here the Dominican showed the deepest knowledge of the sufferings which God permits to the sensitive part of the soul while the superior part remains firm,—“My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?” Fifth,—“I thirst;” sixth,—“It is finished;” lastly, —“Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit!”

During these seven portions of a sermon, or rather these seven sermons, between which were sung some verses of the plaintive "Stabat Mater," the interest and attention of the congregation never flagged; tears, sighs, and groans began, continued, and increased, till on the resounding of the ninth (in our modern style the third) hour, the preacher exclaimed, "Ecco il momento !" and the whole congregation sunk prostrate, one cry of anguish filling the church. Geraldine neither wept nor groaned, but her frame trembled, her heart felt ready to burst, and she remained insensible to the voice of the friar, which continued when she would have preferred silence. At length, she was roused by the simultaneous movement of the multitude to arise, and she beheld, crossing the sanctuary, which had been lined with painted scenery to represent Mount Calvary, a band of friars, who, representing the disciples, ascended by degrees to the cross, and began to draw out the nails, and take down the body. At the sound made by drawing forth each nail, so great was the emotion around her, and so painful her own sensations, that Geraldine, for the first time in her life, expected to faint. From the peasants arose a perfect clamour of grief, and from those of the highest Italian nobility of both sexes around her, the sobs and deep sighs continued, while the prayers in honour of the five sacred wounds of Christ were repeated. And now

the body being taken down from the cross, and laid on a bier, just within the rails of the sanctuary, the congregation moved in regular train to kiss the feet and weep over them. Our heroine moved with the crowd; all was gentle and decent, and in order. At length, it was her turn to approach this semblance of the dead Christ, and the perfection with which the hue of death and lines of suffering were executed, having removed the dread which she had entertained of desecration, she knelt with feelings more in accordance with the ardent crowd around her, than she could have supposed possible.

It was a considerable time before our heroine, in the procession made round the church, arrived at the spot where stood her father, and with him, Dr. Wharton. The General looked with anxiety in her pale exhausted countenance, and drew her hastily through the now dispersing throng into the open air. "You are incapable of anything more to-day, Geraldine," said he, "and I regret having exposed you to all that highly-wrought feeling." Geraldine leaned on her father's arm in silence, while, on their way home, he conversed with Dr. Wharton; but, on his again regretting that he had taken her to the preaching and representation of the "Three Hours," she replied, "There was no more feeling—indeed, how can there ever be sufficient for the all-engrossing commemoration of

to-day. I was indeed overcome by witnessing the emotion of those around me, but, had not the subject deserved it, this alone would only perhaps have steeled me in insensibility ; for, I have ever remarked, that if I see weakness in others, I am so far from sympathising, that I feel new strength given me. But, dare I call the honest sensibility, the warm religious sorrow of these ardent Italians, a weakness ? ah, no ! rather let me strike on my own cold heart."

The General smiled—"God forgive me, then, child, if your heart be cold. But neither of our hearts is so, I humbly trust. Our reserve only is greater, and in this, I think, consists the great difference between the northern and southern nations : the former appear cold, the latter exaggerated. So striking a contrast is there between the Catholics of England and those of Italy, that I much doubt, whether they could live happily together, even with that firmest of all bonds of union, the same dogmas of faith. Now, our countrymen and women, if they be Protestants, never consider this national contrast, and place every apparent extravagance to the score of religion, for they know nothing of Catholicity in their own country, where, from its calm manifestation, it would be of course more acceptable,—at least, less obnoxious."

"Yes, indeed," said Dr. Wharton. "National prejudices influence, in a lamentable degree, the

judgment, if it deserve the name, which Christians of different countries pass on each other, and which judgment has, of course, been rendered more severe from diversity of creed. But let not the cautious and reserved son of the north, and his ardent and imaginative brother of the south, misjudge and condemn each other. Let the strong powers of reasoning, the independent and laborious spirit of investigation and of endurance, which characterises the former, be manifested without pride or severity; and let those intuitive perceptions of beauty and harmony, those impassioned aspirations towards whatever is lovely in creation or revelation, which distinguish the latter, be ever directed aright, and centre in the giver of those rich gifts: and if the outpouring of the soul into outward acts of devotion, be an irrepressible impulse in the southern Christian, and as such most acceptable to the Being who says, ‘My son, give me thy heart;’ yet let these children of a genial sky, in their turn, learn to know, that with a different temperament, and a scrupulous dread of exaggeration, piety can exist with intensity, without requiring any vent save that of secret prayer.”

“Alas!” said Geraldine, “when will it again be said, ‘See how these Christians love each other?’ When will party spirit cease, and distrust and suspicion melt into love and confidence?” She uttered this with the greater feeling, as she

recalled the offensive conduct, during this holy and mournful week, of the British Protestants in Rome, especially during the procession on Maundy Thursday, when the pontiff conveyed the sacred host to the receptacle prepared in the Pauline chapel. Their admission to the private chapel of the holy father, had been a concession, which, even in common decency, not to say courtesy, should have been acknowledged by a respectful demeanour; but, far from this, they had disturbed and insulted, by their levity and ridicule, the whole of the congregation. "I much regret," continued Geraldine to Dr. Wharton, "that the ancient discipline has been discontinued, of dismissing all strangers, even the catechumens, from the church, before the celebration of the mysteries. What can induce the holy father to permit the admission of these idle scoffers?"

"Some come to scoff who remain to pray," replied Dr. Wharton.

"God grant," said our heroine, with a sigh, "that such may be the result of Protestant intrusion this week upon the sacred mysteries of the Church." But she little thought that in one remarkable instance this had been the case, and that at the very procession on Holy Thursday, when the insulting conduct of his friends was at its height, an impression, sudden as wonderful, was made, never to be effaced from the mind and

heart of the chief wit of the party. Yes, to the heart of the classical enthusiast and author, Mr. Ellis, the voice of God had spoken !

He had stood immediately behind the file of guards which lined the centre aisle, through which the procession passed, and, as the pontiff advanced, bearing the sacred Host, the expression of awe, of love, of adoration, with which his venerable countenance was illumined, as he bore the hidden Deity—that look—that never-to-be-forgotten look, wrought the conversion of the sceptic.

CHAPTER VII.

At length the worst is o'er, and thou art laid
Deep in thy darksome bed,
All still and cold, beneath yon dreary stone,
Thy sacred form is gone.
Around those lips, where power and mercy hung,
The dews of death have clung,
The dull earth o'er thee, and thy foes around,
Thou sleep'st, a silent corse, in funeral fetters wound.

IN the evening, Geraldine being invited to hear again the Miserere at the Sistine chapel, accompanied her father thither, and they afterwards drove, with the Abate Zaccaria and Contessa C—, to the hospital Della Trinità de' Pellegrini: an immense building, devoted to the reception of pilgrims of all nations, who during the three last days of the holy week, are gratuitously lodged and fed, while cardinals and nobility of both sexes, in humble piety, give them the primitive welcome, of washing their feet, and waiting on them at supper. Our heroine was permitted to stand a few instants at the half-open door of the male pilgrims, and then ascended, with the Contessa, to the female apartments, where she was greatly pleased to see

the holy simplicity with which some of the loveliest of the high-born, offered, and the lowly received, these acts of humility and hospitality.

“I have not yet heard what were the impressions of the Signorina,” said the Abate, as the party were returning to the palazzo, “on seeing our holy father perform the ceremony of washing the feet of twelve, or, as it is, thirteen priests, in honour of Christ washing the feet of his apostles?”

“I was almost, but not entirely, edified,” replied Geraldine. “I know his present holiness to be full of humility, as well as zeal; therefore I expected, as I have gladly seen to-night, as much reality in the pious act as possible, and did not like to see him so much waited upon, by the attendant cardinal, during the performance; and I felt the same during the commemorative dinner, when there was too much rising and bowing when his holiness handed to each the plates, and bread, and wine.”

“With respect to the holy father being waited upon during his own humble ministry on others, it may, indeed, appear inconsistent,” said the Abate, “till you consider the immense fatigues he has undergone, and has still to undergo, during the incessant ceremonies of the Holy Week, the more trying, on account of his great private austerities. His predecessors have frequently, from age and infirmity, been obliged to receive still

greater assistance, and sometimes to delegate the ceremony to a cardinal: and I see no objection," continued the Abate, "to the priests rising, through humility, when handed the different articles at table by his holiness, for we may suppose the apostles to have given some token of respect to their divine Master, who is now commemorated."

"I think," said the General, "that in former days his holiness performed this act of precept and of commemoration on twelve poor men, previously to attending the priests."

"Yes," said the Abate, "there used to be two commemorations, but both are now in one."

"Why are these thirteen in number?" said Geraldine.

"Various are the reasons given," replied the Abate, "for this addition to the number of the apostles: some see St. Paul, others St. Matthias, in the thirteenth; others the host at whose house Christ celebrated the festival with his disciples; but the most generally received opinion is, that an additional guest is in commemoration of the miraculous appearance of an angel amongst the twelve poor men whom St. Gregory the Great daily fed at his residence, which is now the church on the Monte Celio. And now, what are the plans of the Signora for to-morrow?" added the Abate to General Carrington.

"My daughter's plans ought to be confined to

her pillow," replied the General; "but as I have lost the good habit of ever contradicting her, I suppose we are to be in St. John Lateran, to witness the solemn baptism of some Jewish converts, and the benediction of the fire and incense; are we not Geraldine?"

"And the paschal candle, my own Padrino," said she.

"And all the lessons on prophecies, I suppose," said the General, with a sigh of resignation, "which used to be read for the instruction of the catechumens, and continue for us members of the Church, beginning with Genesis, and giving the whole history of the providence of God to men, from the fall of our first parents to the reparation made by Christ. Signor Abate," continued he, after a little pause, "I like to go to church for worship, not for instruction."

"But do you not like to combine the two?" said the Abate.

"I prefer," said the General, "that instruction should be given apart, unless it may be in sermons."

"But," said the Contessa smiling, "these twelve lessons will enable the General to make twelve acts of patience, and he will rejoice in such an opportunity of merit."

"Which," rejoined the Abate, "might in former days have afforded twenty-four such acts, as they

used to be read in Greek as well as in Latin, for the catechumens of that nation."

"I am still disappointed," said Geraldine, "at the early hour in which the once evening mass of Holy Saturday, is said; for how can one enter into all the joy of a near anticipation of our Lord's resurrection, when we have had no time to watch at his tomb? How beautifully correct and devout are the arrangements of the Church, as they still are found in the missal and breviary for this vigil."

"Yes," said the Abate, "the Church anciently celebrated no mass on this day, not only to express her desolation at the loss of her divine spouse, but as in death the soul and body of Christ were divided, the former descending into limbo, the latter remaining in the tomb, during which time had the Apostles consecrated the elements, the soul of Christ would not have been in the sacred Host and chalice; so in strict commemoration, no consecration took place on Holy Saturday, till midnight."

"The mass of the pre-sanctified on Good Friday is also, I conclude," said Geraldine, "because no consecration should take place during the commemorative absence of Christ's soul from his sacred body?"

"It is so," said the Abate, "Good Friday being commemorative of the time when his dead body would alone have been in the Eucharist, united

however to his divinity, from which it was never separated. In like manner, when Jesus Christ himself consecrated at his last supper, he was in the Eucharist true God, and true man, but passible and mortal as he then was, instead of being, as he now is in the Eucharist, living, glorious, resuscitated, immortal, and, in a word, as he is in heaven.”*

“Then,” said Geraldine, “I am satisfied, as indeed I always am, after deeper enquiry into the wise regulations of the Church; but it certainly appeared strange to me, that the very day on which the death of Jesus Christ is commemorated, the sacrifice, which is the separation of the sacred elements, should not take place, and the communion be only sacramental, and therefore received by the priest under one kind. And tell me, Signor Abate,” continued Geraldine, “if for the reasons you have mentioned, and which I quite understand, the consecration should not be made during the death of our Lord, still I do not see why a separate consecration was not made on Maundy Thursday, and the chalice as well as the Host borne in procession to a place of safety; as everything is so strictly commemorative, why is not the separation of the elements made to show the separation of the soul from the body of Christ?”

“The similitude would not be correct,” replied

* Rodriguez.

the Abate, "because the soul and divinity of Christ, with his body, are equally in the chalice with his blood, as they are with his body in the Host; that is to say, the entire Christ is in each species; therefore, the separation would not be exemplified."

"Then, I conclude," said Geraldine, "that the chalice does not accompany the Host in procession to the receptacle, for fear of any accident and desecration, just as for that reason it is withheld from the laity?"

"You are correct," said the Abate.

On Holy Saturday morning, General Carrington took his daughter to witness the blessing of the fire, and of the paschal candle, followed by the baptism of some Jewish converts, who, having been fully instructed during the Lent, were now with great solemnity baptized by the cardinal-vicar, on this appointed day, in the church of St. John Lateran. The baptismal font in this, and every Catholic church, was previously blessed. The first part of the office was the blessing the element of fire; which rite is found in the oldest liturgies extant, where also will be found proper blessings, not only for those things used for the altar, but in ordinary life,—a new house, a new bed, candles, food, water, &c.; for it is only by the divine blessing that creatures can be made beneficial to us, and evil spirits restrained from employ-

ing them to hurt us. Beseeching then the blessing of God on everything we use, we acknowledge that from Him alone we receive them, to Him alone we would devote them : and this especially must be felt and acknowledged in all that relates to Divine worship ; for, in the language of Scripture, creatures groan under the slavery of corruption, and must be purified and consecrated to God, before they be employed in his service.

The mystery of Christ's resurrection being the spiritual renovation of the world, Easter has always been esteemed the most suitable season for blessing many things we use. Fire enlightens our altars and churches, and is of great and continual use in our natural and civil life ; it ought, therefore, to be blessed before the paschal candle, for which it is required : and it is the custom for all lights and fires to be put out, and lighted up anew from fire struck from a flint, and blessed. This new fire represents Christ rising to kindle in our hearts a new spiritual fire of his love ; the old profane fire of our earthly passions being first extinguished in us by his victory over sin. It likewise serves symbolically to remind us of our obligation of walking in the newness of a spiritual life, being now risen with Christ by his grace.

The paschal candle is an illustrious emblem of Christ rising from the dead, the light of the world ; and is a sign which announces to us the joy and

glory of his resurrection. The five grains of frankincense fixed in it, symbolically represent his five precious wounds, the embalming of his body at his burial ; and the spices brought by the holy women to his sepulchre. This great candle anciently gave light during the night-watching in the church on Easter eve.*

Geraldine observed in the sanctuary during the service of Holy Saturday, besides the paschal candle, a triple light, which she concluded was to signify "the light of the Triune God, shining to the world through Christ," and, on inquiring afterwards, found she was correct. The previous blessing of the fire was as follows: a fire was struck from a flint outside the church, and coals were kindled from it. The officiating priest with his ministers proceeded to the portico of the church, and thus blessed the fire.

"The Lord be with you."

"And with thy spirit."

"Let us pray. O God, who hast bestowed on thy faithful, the fire of thy brightness, by thy Son who is the corner stone: sanctify this new fire produced from the flint, that it may prove serviceable to us: and grant us so to be inflamed with heavenly desires through this paschal solemnity, that we may be able to arrive with pure minds at

* "Moveable feasts and fasts of the Catholic Church," by the Rev. Alban Butler.

the festival of perpetual light, through the same Christ our Lord. Amen."

Two more collects followed, and the five grains of incense were blessed. The thurifer then filled the thurible with coals from the fire, and the celebrant, having sprinkled the grains of incense and the fire with holy water, said the "Aspergesme," &c. "Thou shalt sprinkle me with hyssop, O Lord, and I shall be cleansed: thou shalt wash me, and I shall be made whiter than snow." On the new fire he then thrice threw the incense; the deacon lighted one of the triple lights which he held on a reed, and they entered the church; when kneeling, the deacon chanted, "Lumen Christi," the light of Christ. The same words were sung by him in a louder tone in the middle of the church, and still louder and more joyfully before the altar. Then, having asked the priest's blessing, it was thus given; "May the Lord be on thy heart, and on thy lips, that thou mayest worthily and duly announce his paschal praise: in the name of the Father, and of the Son, ✠ and of the Holy Ghost. Amen."

Here the five grains of frankincense were fixed on the paschal candle in the form of a cross, with an appropriate prayer; the triple candle blessed, and also the lamps of the church; and, after the concluding prayer, the deacon changing his white vestments for purple, those twelve long lessons

from the Old Testament were read, which the General had wished omitted.

At the conclusion of the lessons the baptismal font was blessed, and baptism solemnly given by the cardinal-vicar to four Jewish converts. The Litany from which that in the Church of England is principally taken, then followed; while the officiating cardinal lay prostrate at the altar, the rest of the ministers kneeling. At the conclusion, the choir sang the "Kyrie Eleison, Christe Eleison, Kyrie Eleison, Lord have mercy on us, Christ have mercy on us, Lord have mercy on us:" and mass began as usual, with lights on the altar, and directly the "Gloria in excelsis" was intoned, the veil was withdrawn from the altar-piece, the bells once more gave their joyous peal, and so well had the time been calculated with the mass at the pontiff's chapel, which gives the signal throughout the city, that before the choir had concluded the hymn of joy, the bells of every church in Rome, with the cannon from the Castle of St. Angelo, proclaimed the glad tidings of the resurrection.

CHAPTER VIII.

O day of days! shall hearts set free,
No minstrel rapture find for thee?
Thou art the sun of other days,
They shine, by giving back thy rays.

Enthroned in thy Sovereign sphere,
Thou shedd'st thy light on all the year:
Sundays by Thee, more glorious break
An Easter day in every week.

GENERAL CARRINGTON and his daughter, having passed the remainder of Easter Eve in private devotion, and having each approached the tribunal of confession together, knelt at the early Mass in the little church of —, and together received their risen and glorified Saviour. There still remained time for private thanksgiving, rest, and refreshment, before they attended the grand pontifical High Mass at St. Peter's, to which, crowds had been hastening to secure places even since sun-rise. Our heroine and her father had seats in the tribune erected near the high altar, and nearly opposite the throne, so that nothing was lost to them of the peculiar ceremonies of this great day. After having attended the previous commemora-

tions in the confined dimensions of the Sistine chapel, the space of St. Peter's appeared more than ever wonderful and magnificent, lined, as it was now, with the 'Guarda Nobile' in their rich gold and scarlet cloth, and white ostrich plumes, and the Swiss guards in polished cuirasses and helmets of steel; while, up the great centre aisle, advanced a procession, which, for splendour and sacerdotal majesty, could not have been surpassed even in the temple of Jerusalem; and, as Geraldine heard the signal trumpet sound, and caught the first view of the patriarchs, with their flowing beards, she could imagine that David and the high-priest were about to follow:—and mystically so they were, united in the royal priest, who, borne in his crimson chair of state, and wearing the white robes of joy, gave his benedictions on each side, as he advanced to the high altar, while the church bells mingled with the trumpets and other military music, and the choristers intoned, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock will I build my Church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it."

On arriving opposite the little chapel, where the blessed sacrament was exhibited, the holy father, removing his triple crown, descended to kneel in prayer with his cardinals. He was then borne to the foot of the high altar, where he again knelt in prayer before ascending the throne, which was on the epistle side of the sanctuary,

and which was then surrounded by the priestly court of cardinals, patriarchs, archbishops, bishops, mitred abbots, and penitentiaries. After they had paid their homage, the pontiff rising, and laying aside the tiara, intoned the versicle, at the opening of the office of tierce (the third hour), "*Deus in adiutorium meum intende*"—"Incline unto my aid, O God;" and while the choir continued the office, he read the private preparation for Mass; after which, having been vested by the cardinals, he gave out the concluding prayer of the hour, and, descending from the throne, went with nearly all those who stood around it, to the altar on which the triple crown was laid. The High Mass, with more than its ordinary ceremonial, then began, amidst clouds of incense and voices innumerable, in perfect harmony resounding the "*Hæc dies*"—"This is the day which the Lord hath made, let us be glad and rejoice therein." After the consecration and elevation of the host, the pontiff, having paid his adoration, and the "*Agnus Dei*" having been said, left the altar, and ascended the throne, where, having received from the deacon and subdeacon the paten and chalice, he took the holy communion, and then gave to each of the two assistant priests the remaining particles of the sacred Host. They also partook of the chalice, after having received from the holy father the kiss of peace, and returned to the altar.

Geraldine considered what this could mean, and

proposed several mystical explanations to herself during the latter part of the service, amongst which was the following, which was correct, namely,—
“That as our blessed Saviour first instituted the holy sacrifice, and commenced his mystic offering when he consecrated the holy eucharist upon the table in the private chamber, with his apostles only, but perfected and consummated it openly before the multitude upon Mount Calvary ; so his venerable vicar consumes upon the elevated platform of the throne, in presence of the assembly, that sacred body and blood which he had consecrated at the altar, in presence only of his priestly attendants. Several of the cardinals, and of the chief nobility, then made their Easter communion, after which, the pontiff returning to the altar, read the concluding prayers of the Mass, during which the General, having silently opened the door of the tribune, signed to Geraldine to follow him, and quickly led her, by ways to him familiar, up to the loggia—a gallery erected on the top of the colonnade, which surrounds the piazza of the church, and to seats kept for them in the front row, by two of the military. Geraldine looked down on the piazza, or rather on the heads of the people, who in one dense mass were in expectation of the papal benediction, and then along the colonnade, which was equally covered with the higher orders, principally English,—and longed to be

amongst the simple devout peasantry below, till a feeling of personal safety made her thankful for her elevated position, when she beheld the military, and behind them, fresh thousands, pouring down the steps and platform of the church into the piazza. All was, however, in the greatest order; no noise, no struggle between the guards and the people; all were apparently impressed by the nature of the ceremony which had thus assembled them. At length, even the subdued murmur of expectation was hushed, for the ancient white “flabelli,” or feather fans, were seen, which preceded the pontiff, and Gregory XIV, the two hundred and fifty-seventh successor to St. Peter, appeared on the gallery without the church; and raising his hands and eyes to implore the assistance of the blessed spirits which surround the throne of God, he thus prayed:—“May the holy apostles, Peter and Paul, in whose power and authority we place confidence, intercede for us with the Lord. Amen.” “We ask through the prayers and merits of the blessed Mary ever virgin, of the blessed John the Baptist, of the blessed apostles, Peter and Paul, and all the saints, that the Almighty God may have mercy upon you, and that all your sins being forgiven, Jesus Christ would bring you to eternal life. Amen.” “May the Almighty and merciful Lord bestow upon you indulgence, absolution, and remission of all your sins; opportunity of true

and fruitful penitence; hearts always contrite and penitent; amendment of life; grace and consolation of the Holy Ghost; and final perseverance in good works. Amen." Here the pontiff arose; those few of the multitude who had remained standing, sank on their knees, and he continued,—“And may the blessing of Almighty God, Father✠, Son✠, and Holy Ghost✠, descend upon you, and remain with you for ever. Amen.” One of the cardinals now read, first in Latin, and then in Italian, the notice signifying, that to all those who had attended with true dispositions of contrition, and fervent purpose of amendment, and had complied with the conditions of the Church, the holy father granted a plenary indulgence. Printed notices of this announcement were then thrown down amongst the people, while the cardinal-deacon, in the name of the sacred college, congratulated his holiness on the recurrence of the sacred festival; and the last “Amen” was thrice repeated by the chanters, amidst the peal of bells from St. Peter’s, re-echoed by all the churches, by the loud trumpets of the military, and by the artillery of the Castle. Many,—we will trust most of those present,—raising their hearts with St. Austin, who, on this joyful feast, exclaims,—“O happy Alleluia, which we shall one day sing in heaven! where the angels are the temples of God; where all those who shall publish his praises, shall

be linked together in the bands of love, and in perfect peace; and those who praise God, shall possess perfect security and joy. O happy Alleluia! Let us also sing here below, Alleluia! though we now live in pain and trouble, that we may sing it there in perfect security. O Alleluia! Praise ye the Lord."

This first of the three years which our heroine passed in Italy, Easter fell unusually late; and in a few days after the festival of the resurrection, Rome was nearly emptied of the strangers who had flocked into the city. General Carrington however still lingered, until the commencement of June, and Geraldine resumed her vocal and artistic pursuits with fresh ardour. Her father then took her, first to Frascati, where several of their acquaintances had taken villas, and afterwards to Tivoli, where, had a suitable residence been found, our heroine would fain have dwelt. Such however was not the case; and perceiving that the General much inclined towards Frascati, which is only half the distance from Rome, she endeavoured to forget the wilder beauties of the former place, and to enjoy the freshness of those lovely groves of arbutus, ilex, pines, and cypresses, which surrounded the stately villa of her father's preference. One sight more in Rome fell to her lot just three weeks after their removal to Frascati, and gratified her more than she could have supposed possible from the

nature of the exhibition. This was the illumination of St. Peter's, and the fireworks from the Castle of St. Angelo, to which she was taken by her father, and which she would willingly have declined, but for her earnest wish to receive his affectionate attentions with all the pleasure she had hitherto felt. After this wonderful and beautiful sight, our heroine remained, during the sultry months, partly at Frascati, partly at Cività Vecchia, with the Contessa C—, and the family of Cardinal W—. At the latter place she celebrated, amongst those congenial friends, the anniversary of her entrance, or, as they always termed it, her return to the Church, and the blessed event of her first communion.

It was in the summer of this year, after Geraldine's return to Frascati, that she was informed by her father, that proposals had been made to him, on the part of an illustrious Italian family, for an alliance between herself and the second son, who was spoken of very highly; but that unless she had strong reasons against what he was about to propose, it was that she should consent to a match of inferior title, but far more advantageous in every other respect, namely, with Sir Eustace De Grey. It would be impossible to describe our heroine's astonishment at this sudden mention of a name, which had never passed her father's lips, and which comprised so much that was calculated to embarrass her. The first painful

impression was, that her father was wearied of the domestic tie from which he had been so long free, and her heart resented what she conceived a plan, to make her happy, independently of himself. She remained silent, and the General continued to pass encomiums on that ‘highly talented and deserving young man,’ his ancient family, the friendship that had so long existed between Sir Hugh De Grey and himself, &c., all winding up to the climax that he was one of the most eligible matches in England.

Since leaving England, our heroine had frequently recalled De Grey to her remembrance, and had dwelt longer on that remembrance than she would ever have admitted even to herself, but her thoughts had turned entirely on his truth, his manly courage, and his sincere piety. She had only known him as poor ; she had forgotten that he had become rich, and the De Grey of her imagination had no identity with that “highly deserving young man,” presented to her, in so prosaic a manner, as an eligible match. A thousand vague but uneasy feelings arose. Where then was Sir Eustace De Grey ? Why had he never endeavoured to conciliate her farther esteem, before sending these abrupt proposals.

The silence continued for some considerable time ; at length the General said, “ Well, child, have you no enquiries to make ? ”

“ I have, my dear father,” she replied : “ pray what has become of Don Carlos Duago?”

Not all the artillery on the plains of Vittoria, had caused so startling an effect, as this short sentence on the frame of the General. He replied however as a politician, by another question : “ And pray what can he or any one have to do with our present conversation ? and what is your motive for this enquiry ?”

“ I should like to know that he is happy,” said Geraldine.

“ Upon my word,” said the General, in a tone of sarcastic pleasantry, “ I believe the happiness of Don Carlos Duago, to be chiefly influenced by the smiles of a certain beautiful Andalusian ; but should I ever chance to meet him, I can mention that a fair English lady cannot forget him.”

“ It is enough, sir !” said Geraldine, the indignant spirit flashing from her eyes. Then in a softer tone she added, “ Could I hope to form your happiness, my father, as you have done mine, I would entreat you to propose no one to me, but let me continue, as I once hoped ever to be, your own Geraldine.”

The General was moved, and in his most conciliating and endearing manner, assured her of his unabated affection, and that she would still and ever continue his own Geraldine ; but that, in-

volved as he was in public life, it would ensure his happiness to see her united to one deserving of her ; and explained to her his reasons for concealing from her till now the restrictions he had placed on De Grey ; and by his apparently unreserved confidence, won from her the avowal that her preference accorded with his wishes : that she had inquired for Don Carlos only from a wish to have her mind relieved from any responsibility concerning him ; and promised that if her father would not hurry her to respond to feelings she then heard of for the first time, she would receive Sir Eustace when he should arrive, as one to whom she owed both esteem and gratitude, from his having aided her to find her present happiness in the Catholic Church.

Soon after this conversation, De Grey presented himself at Frescati, and the following autumn General Carrington received the long expected appointment to the —— Isles. This made him hasten his daughter's marriage ; and our heroine, notwithstanding her preference for the object of her father's choice, a preference now strengthened into sincere attachment, was hurt to perceive how easily she, who had been her father's pride and comfort, and sole anxiety, was now transferred to the guardianship of another.

CHAPTER IX.

Old friends, old scenes, will lovelier be,
As more of Heaven in each we see;
Some softening gleam of love and prayer,
Shall dawn on every cross and care.—*Keble.*

“GERALDINE,” said De Grey, the year after their marriage, on their return to Milan from a complete tour of Italy, “do you ever think of England?”

“Indeed I do,” she replied; “I think very often of Elverton, and of the abbey, and of Father Bernard, and, above all, of the good we may do amongst the dear poor.”

“And do you never think of the Moat?” said he.

“Ah!” replied Geraldine, “you know very well that but for the abbey I would rather live at the Moat than at the Hall, notwithstanding all the ghost stories; for I would rather not accept the sacrifice you make to my father’s wishes, of dividing your time between the two properties.”

“I think it so wise a request,” said De Grey, “that I have no difficulty in complying with it;

besides, whatever be your attractions towards the old ruin, they cannot surpass mine."

"But why do we talk of England in this manner?" said Geraldine. "Do you think we ought to return?"

"Indeed," replied De Grey, "I have thought so during the last six months, but I waited for you to propose it."

"And I am making such rapid progress in the perfection of obedience," said Geraldine, laughing, "that I have even arrived at not proposing anything. But I am truly willing to return."

And accordingly, a short time after this discovery of each other's sentiments, Sir Eustace and Lady Carrington De Grey returned to England, and to Elverton Hall, to the satisfaction of their friends, particularly Mr. Everard, and to the joy of the tenantry. The exact time of their expected arrival being ascertained from the steward, a band of stout and active enthusiasts awaited the travelling carriage, at a turn of the road, about a mile from the town, and dispossessing the tired horses and their riders of the prize, bore, with a speed incredible, through the hurraing multitude, the heiress of the manor towards her home. With the Catholics, who formed no inconsiderable portion of the crowd, the name of Sir Eustace, and blessings and welcomes, resounded with equal if not greater zeal: and our heroine, who had hitherto

only laughed, with sparkling eyes, and glowing cheeks, now wept for joy.

"Geraldine," said De Grey, "all this is very pleasant to flesh and blood, but it is not the way of the cross."

"Ah, Eustace!" cried she, "do not prevent their honest 'welcome home.'"

"Not I, indeed," replied he. "It is very right for them to feel thus towards us, but we must take care, at the same time, to humble ourselves."

"Then let us repeat one of the penitential psalms," said Geraldine, "till we reach the Hall." They did so, and were together sounding forth the "Gloria Patri" at the end of the Miserere, when the steps of the carriage were let down by the faithful servants; and as De Grey and his wife entered the hall, they were folded in the arms of Lady Winefride.

Two happy useful years succeeded. As Geraldine had hoped, they effected much good amongst the "dear poor" on their estate, and were on the most friendly and hospitable terms with the families of their own condition, Catholic and Protestant. De Grey, in common with all the Catholics of the neighbourhood, had, before his quitting England for Italy, devoted one day in the week to prayers for the conversion (or re-conversion) of his country, and in the household now settled at Elverton Hall, this pious and patriotic

practice was resumed ; De Grey and his wife, with some of the domestics, offering the spiritual benefit derived from holy mass and communion, with that intention, and all joining in the “ Litany of Intercession for England.”*

Shortly after Geraldine’s return, Miss Graham became her guest, and gave a place in her large heart to her friend’s husband as frankly as he had requested it. The changes in the neighbourhood during the three years’ absence of our heroine, had been many and great, but, in the welfare of two families only, was her heart interested beyond the duties of charity. The Rev. Edmund Sinclair, and De Grey, became sincerely attached to each other, and the mutual agreement of the families to dwell on those points only wherein they thought alike, produced frequent and affectionate intercourse between the vicarage and hall.

The old Earl of Hungerford was dead, and his widow continued to live at the Priory with her son and his lady, formerly Miss Scotney, whose “ views,” under the training of Major Tankerville, had at length arrived at that perfection of clearness and precision, that, in the household over which she now presided, no one besides herself, her husband and her own maid, could expect salvation.

The Dowager Countess received our heroine with a burst of grief and affection, so touching, that

* See Catholic Manual of Prayers.

no one, far less Geraldine, could remain unmoved. The fountain of her sorrows was unlocked, and she poured forth a history, which, after three years entire separation from such "sayings and doings," seemed to our heroine like some broad caricature of human life, in which it was impossible she could ever have borne a part. The poor old lady might have exclaimed, "If in this life only I am to have hope, then were I most miserable;" for, she was fully aware, that her daughter-in-law's number of the elect was the "smallest of the small," and she repeated, that if she had had the strength of mind to keep to her old ways of religion, like her dear lord, she should be much happier; but, that she had not his courage, and farther informed Geraldine, that, in his last illness, Lord Hungerford resolutely barred his wing of the house "from all communication," as he called it, "with those who wished to convert it into a Bedlam:" said the Lord's prayer, the creed, and the ten commandments, every day; wished every man's conscience as comfortable as he found his own, and at last sent for the clergyman of the parish, and received the communion of the Church of England from him the evening before his death.

Before our heroine left her distressed old friend, she prevailed on her to visit the hall, and, on seeing the delight and terror which struggled in her countenance, promised that no one should attempt

her conversion during her stay. This produced a ready and grateful assent, and she actually made a private escape from Sedgemoor to Elverton in the following week, where she found a peace and freedom she had not known for years, and this without any misgivings of conscience, as Katherine, although more than ever that "eternal Miss Graham," became a confidential friend and adviser, to our heroine's great relief. Katherine had, by the death of relations, become possessed of a small independence, which she had resolved should continue such, having fully determined never to sacrifice her liberty to any one. Her former admirer and connexion had, on the discovery of her unexpected inheritance, discovered also the permanency of his attachment, but Katherine replied, in the witty and sarcastic words of an ancient Scotch ballad, a decisive negative.

De Grey used to rally Katherine on this spirit of independence in which she gloried, but of which he told her, he did not think the apostles would have approved. "For," said he, "you will find but two states of life spoken of in the Epistles and in the Acts of the Apostles; the consecrated virgin or widow, and the married mistress of a family." Many battles would ensue, to Geraldine's amusement; Katherine vindicating the freedom of her maiden state, and the great power it gave her of doing good, and challenging De Grey to find even

in the order of charity, a more useful and pious set of women than she could show him in Edinburgh, amongst the sisterhood of seculars, who served God in their own way, with the freedom of a willing heart, and required no tyrant to lay down the law to them, and curb the true liberty of the children of God.

Katherine in her turn would rally our heroine on her loss of that precious liberty, and pretend to attribute, to the tyranny to which she had submitted, the silence and calm she observed to have stolen over her since they were last together. "I think, Geraldine," said she, one day, "that you are beginning not to care whether you are admired or neglected, praised or dispraised; and this must be in imitation of Sir Eustace, for I never before witnessed in any one living in society such indifference about its opinion."

"It is indeed the case with him," said Geraldine, "and is to be attributed to the singleness of heart with which he serves God. 'Self-love leads to multiplicity, divine love produces simplicity,' says an old Catholic author I have been lately reading, and I think he adds, 'Divine love is a calm and resolute determination of the will to seek God, undistracted by creatures. This fidelity to the grace of God is indeed constantly shown me by my husband.'"

The next time Geraldine was alone with De

Grey, something occurring to make her recall the observation of Miss Graham, that she appeared indifferent whether she were "admired or neglected, praised or dispraised," she said, "For some time past, praise, however soothing at the moment, has so completely passed from my mind, that in vain should I attempt to recall the language in which it has been uttered: and this has occurred in too many and remarkable instances not to have impressed me with gratitude, for surely this is the work of God."

"Every advance we make to the conviction that all that is not God is nothing, must be through his grace," said De Grey; "but still, there may be a natural cause for the faint impression which praise makes on you; because, you are so much accustomed to it, that you hear it just as you would any other truism; for instance, that it is a fine day, when not a cloud is in the sky, or breeze troubling the earth; and in the same way you forget the praise, as one fine day succeeding another prevents any distinct remembrance of them apart: while the slightest blame, like a passing hail-storm, disturbs, perhaps, the complacency of your fair-weather feelings, and you remember it as an intrusion, and an injury."

"That is indeed true," said Geraldine, "I still remain too sensible to blame; not a word or look of censure is ever forgotten, and will even rise in importance in the retrospect."

“ I think that there is more self-love than humility in this,” said De Grey ; “ it is not until by corresponding faithfully with the grace of God, he rewards us with sufficient strength to conquer nature, that we can renounce and fly from the opinions and judgment of creatures, and approach God.”

“ But if we have incurred the disapprobation of those who are friends and favourites of God,” said Geraldine, “ we may then grieve?”

“ We may, and ought to grieve,” said De Grey, “ if we have incurred their censure, inasmuch as we have thereby offended God. Personal feelings, however, and misunderstandings, ought not to afflict the soul. God often permits the greatest saints to try each other severely, yet without sin. But you know all this far better than I can tell you, Geraldine. Why do you invite me to preach when I ought to be the listener?”

“ Ah !” cried Geraldine, “ you are now telling me that it is a fine day, when not a cloud is in the sky, or breeze troubling the earth ! When shall I see the hail-storm ?”

De Grey, who had risen to leave the room, now returned, and taking up a little packet of notes which lay beside Geraldine, he looked attentively at them, and then said, “ If you really desire that I should advise—for it has not yet deserved blame—I would say that you are becoming too eager in this affair. You seem disposed to leave nothing

for Almighty God to do. You surely have written and exhorted enough for its human support. Now make an act of resignation of its ill success, and dismiss it from your thoughts except in prayer."

"I will be guided by you," replied Geraldine. "Would you prefer my burning these remaining notes?"

"I would indeed," he replied; and Geraldine, repressing a sigh, watched the flames as they consumed the labours of the morning. At length, she said, smiling, "Confess to me, Eustace, that you do not enter very warmly into my plans for improving the condition of our Catholic poor?"

"Perhaps not," said he; "at any rate, I do not pretend to compare my zeal with yours; for you are always striving to better their condition in life: and were your power equal to your wishes, the poor would cease to exist in the land. A misfortune which, I thank God, is not likely to take place."

"I should like to see them independent of precarious bounty," said she, "by the men being provided with constant labour."

"Ah! but your grand schemes of political economy do not rest here," said De Grey. "You would like to see the son of the labourer become a small farmer, and his grandson raised to be a great landed proprietor, and member for the county."

"No, indeed!" replied she, laughing, "even were I to live to the good old age requisite to

watch this spirit of exaltation. But as you have drawn one picture, let me draw its contrast, and place you in the foreground, emptying your purse, while I am ladling out soup to sturdy mendicants of every age and sex, who, finding it far easier to live on the bounty of the rich than to labour, are content literally to ‘take no thought for the morrow, what they shall eat, or what they shall drink, or wherewithal they shall be clothed.’”

“And why should they not take our Saviour’s words just as he spoke them?” said De Grey.

“Surely,” replied Geraldine, “our Lord intended only, that after we have done what we can, we are to rest without anxious thought.”

“Geraldine,” said De Grey, “you have not yet felt the striking difference which exists between the Protestant and Catholic poor, as regards their condition. The former,—I speak of the pious alone of each denomination,—look on poverty as an evil from which it is their duty to escape; the latter, as a condition, not only pronounced blessed by the Saviour, but sanctified by his personal choice. They hear and read of the perils of the rich; they know that many have left, and are daily leaving their possessions, and becoming poor, that they may be rich in heaven. They know, also, that those Catholics who retain the stewardship of their riches, give to the poor as ‘lending to the Lord;’ and that, on their parts, if they learn not

humility, patience, love of sufferings, and conformity to the will of God, they are unfaithful to the means of grace afforded them by their lowly condition."

"Is it then this preference of poverty and humiliation," said Geraldine, "which causes such a contrast between the lower orders in Catholic and Protestant countries?"

"I do not admit that the Protestant states are necessarily more flourishing," replied De Grey; "but of late years, Almighty God has permitted such heavy afflictions to fall on his Church, that in Catholic countries no one scarcely can be anything but poor; yet, a great contrast would always be seen in this respect, that in Catholic countries the peasant is contented to remain such, while a restless wish to be a greater man than his father actuates every class in the northern states. This is the glory of the political economist, but it is not the glory of the Gospel."

Soon after this conversation, their friends having left them, De Grey and his wife removed for the summer months to the Moat, where having fewer active duties, Geraldine indulged her increasing love for Catholic books of divinity, and her still greater love of silent thought. De Grey, who was both a reader and a thinker, would interrupt her at length as much for her sake as his own, and they would converse on the subjects which interested each.

One day, however, it was our heroine's turn to break the silence, by consulting him respecting her faithful, but now incompetent maid, Mrs. Kelsoe; whose temper had at length become all but insupportable to herself and others.

"Do you not think, Eustace," said she, "that it is far better to remove from oneself 'dangerous occasions' of impatience?"

"It is still better to conquer the impatience," said he.

"But," said Geraldine, "I really love her, and wish to see her happy. She is not so at present, because, being obliged to have an assistant in the person of that sweet little Jane, and yet tormented by her jealousy, which she calls her feelings, she is miserable herself, and torments both me and her unfortunate aide-de-camp. Would it not be very desirable to give her the south Lodge at Elverton, with everything to make her happy?"

"Why do you consult me about it at all?" said De Grey.

"Because," replied Geraldine, "I wish to do what is best."

"I think then," said De Grey, "by your sending Mrs. Kelsoe into honourable banishment, you would lose the opportunity afforded you of suffering something for God's sake. It is a Catholic principle 'not to seek for much rest, but for much patience;'* although without an especial grace,

* A Kempis, b. iii, c. 35.

we are not advised to seek trials. How often have you admired the aged domestics you see in most of our Catholic families, who have never changed their masters. Attachment and fidelity alone do not effect this."

"Did I not think," said Geraldine, "that my dear old friend would be made happier by the change, I would not propose her elevation to be mistress of the Lodge."

"I am convinced you would not," said De Grey, "but it is of yourself I am thinking. What other trial have you? None whatever! Do not therefore shrink from this. The principle of receiving all suffering as a positive good to the soul, will enable you to bear it."

Mrs. Kelsoe, therefore, was to remain, and her lady willingly consented to suffer, until the former should spontaneously offer to resign her office, which soon after their return to Elverton took place, to the relief and promotion of her long-tried assistant. Her feelings were soothed by the charge of the south Lodge, where she was often visited by her lady, and where she often entertained other guests by the account of her travels. Above all, of her having actually seen the pope, who looked as much of a Christian as any of them!

"All is calm around you now, Geraldine," said De Grey, "yet,

‘ Like ships that have gone down at sea,
When heaven was all tranquillity.’

you are drooping both in health and spirits. Is the trial within ?”

Geraldine looked up and smiled, but the smile was not from the heart, and all that could be extracted from her was, that she was conscious of a change within, but could scarcely define or comprehend, far less explain it.

De Grey said no more, but continued to observe her frequent fits of abstraction, and that, with the exception of works of benevolence, she would forget every wonted pursuit, to muse as she thought, unseen. When roused from, and rallied on, these absent fits, Geraldine would, as at first, smile, and playfully elude the subject, but soon these abstracted hours were prolonged, and De Grey sometimes surprised her in tears, for which she either would not, or could not, account, and which began at length to produce a feeling on his side of resentment, for this want of confidence ; and something of constraint and estrangement arose, as a cloud between them. One evening, when, having vainly sought her in her accustomed haunts, De Grey was passing the cedar grove to make a fresh search, he caught a glimpse of Geraldine’s white dress, which the next instant was lost in the deep foliage ; and moved by his wounded and impetuous feelings, he darted up the nearest walk, and again guided

by a passing glimpse of the white dress, he dashed through the obstructing branches and stood before her. Geraldine had chosen for her place of refuge, a circular opening made by the removal of one of the trees, the lower part of the trunk having been left with the root, against which she had just knelt, but arose on hearing the approach of her husband, and both remained silent.

“How have I deserved this?” at length said De Grey. “Is it after four years of union in love and faith, that you would now fly from me? Have we not together shared all the blessings of the altar? Have we not opened our hearts to each other, and have I ever controlled your pious exercises? Have I not rather by my sympathy and approval, given you encouragement?”

Geraldine was still silent, and when De Grey next spoke, it was with a voice choked by emotion.

“How changed the time, Geraldine, when soon after our marriage, having reproached you with smiling on every one as well as on me, you made me this sweet answer: ‘Oh, Eustace, what are smiles? mine, it is true, spring from my happy heart, and call on all creatures to rejoice with me, but you alone can ever have the sacred privilege of my tears!’ and have you kept your word? No! you weep in secret, you dread my intrusion on your solitude, you even deny me a reply!” De Grey bent his look keenly on Geraldine as he

spoke, for hitherto, at the slightest word or even tone of rebuke from him, her sensitive feelings would overpower her, and he would be forced to become the comforter. He now stood awaiting the moment in which he might approach and pardon her, and as she continued to cover her face with her hands, he expected to see the tears trickle through them, but when Geraldine removed them, her eyes were tearless, and her countenance, though sad, was calm and resolved.

“Yes,” at length she said, “I will speak, I will open to you my whole heart. I could not have kept any earthly secret from you, and in my heart I have told you this, but I had not courage to give you pain, and all my prayers, and all my communions, have been offered for strength to tell you,—that I—that a great change has come over me,—I no longer,—oh! Eustace, I can love only God!”

It was now De Grey’s turn to be silent: an undefined sense of approaching bereavement struck on his heart. Geraldine continued: “Indeed I wished long since to tell you this, and in answer to my prayers, strength seemed to be given me in my dream of last night.”

“Your dream!” echoed De Grey, impatiently, “you are forbidden by the Church to place confidence in dreams.”

“But I will only use it,” said Geraldine, “to illustrate the state of my soul. I was alone, and

looking up to Heaven, when a dove descended and nestled in my bosom. I began to caress it, but it left me again for Heaven, then returned—then left me—again returned—and thus it continued till I awoke. Oh ! Eustace, I am like that dove, I am borne above this world, and raised in spirit to joy I never knew till now, and then I return to my earthly love.”

“ And so you ought,” cried De Grey. “ You are not called to spend your life in raptures ; but these favours are given you that you may be still more faithful to those duties and ties on earth, to which, in the sight of Heaven, you are pledged.”

“ I do not think,” said she, “ that the happiness I enjoy, when alone with my God, can be called a rapture or extacy, for I am not borne out of myself, I do not lose my identity, although I forget it, for I neither think nor reason about anything. I am conscious of the presence of God, in an immediate, awful, yet sweet manner, and I seem to desire no more. I do not pray or praise : all the active powers of my mind seem hushed—my heart seems calmly content,—and thus I remain till something external rouses me.”

“ And then,” replied De Grey, “ you ought to return with renewed vigour to the duties of your state. Do you suppose that *I* have no struggle to prevent my affections for you becoming too engrossing ? Do you suppose that *I* forget that I

must love you in God and for God,—can it be possible that you wish to leave me.”

“ I do not wish to leave you,” said Geraldine.

“ I trust not,” said he, “ for were you to do so, you would be most guilty in the sight of Heaven. Remember that, in the instances, which, perhaps, you have in your mind, of the early saints, the consent of both parties was necessary, and I do not give mine—I, at least, will remain faithful to that sacrament which is the symbol of Christ and his Church, and which made us one.”

“ Ah ! Eustace,” cried she, “ you think me wrong, and I have given you pain, yet you would have the secrets of my heart.”

“ I prefer knowing them,” said he ; “ but, believe me, that it is very contrary to your usual judgment and steady piety, to suffer dreams and vain fervours to draw you from me.”

“ Alas ! alas !” cried she, “ they must appear vain fervours, but—”

“ Yes, Geraldine, they are so ; and if you will, for once, yield your judgment to mine, you will be happy.”

“ For once !” cried she. “ Oh, Eustace, I have been ever submissive to you.”

“ You have, Geraldine, you have been submissive, and your submission has been adorned with every grace that could render it acceptable to God, for whose sake you have yielded your will :

but I now ask—and for the first time I ask it—the submission of your understanding—this, inasmuch as it is more difficult and more painful, is more heroic ; but there was a time when nothing could seem difficult or painful, if done for God and for me.”

“ If it be really for God and for you, no sacrifice could seem great,” said she.

“ Well, then,” said De Grey, “ make the sacrifice of these solitary musings, of these secret extacies, for a while at least, and in the meantime we will both pray that you may see the delusion, if it be one.”

“ If it be one,” repeated she.

“ Ah ! Geraldine,” cried he, “ you cannot yield ; and yet, believe me, that God values far more the humility which mistrusts itself, than all the raptures imaginable.”

Geraldine replied not, but stood silently in prayer, her eyes raised to Heaven, and De Grey felt his heart beat as he awaited the result. At length, slowly approaching him, she knelt at his feet and wept. A flush of joy overspread his face as he raised her:

“ Where is the poor dove now ?” asked he, tenderly.

“ On earth ! on earth !” sighed Geraldine.

“ Yet ‘ blessed are the poor in spirit,’ ” said De Grey, “ ‘ for their’s is the kingdom of Heaven.’ ”

CHAPTER X.

The tomb to the blushing rose thus said,
"Of the tears upon thee, by the morning shed,
What makest thou, flower of love?"
The rose, in her turn, thus questioned the tomb,
"What makest thou in thy gulph of gloom,
Of all thou devourest from above?"

Said the rose to the tomb, "From those precious tears,
A scent, that of amber and honey appears,
I breathe out 'mid the silence of night."
And the tomb replied to the rose, "Plaintive flower,
Of every soul that I seem to devour,
I make a blest angel of light."—*Victor Hugo.*

"WHO is the disengaged and independent one now?" said Geraldine to her husband, a few weeks after the above conversation, when, at the end of more than an hour's silence, she approached him, and took his hand. "I have spoken and you have not answered, I have sung and you have not listened, I have changed the flowers at the window beside you, and you have seen neither me nor them. And I do not love this last silence, for you have often sighed."

"Have I," said he, and he again sighed.

“Ah, what is it?” asked she, “have I grieved you?”

“Geraldine,” said De Grey, “when I extorted your promise to resist the supernatural attraction given to you in prayer, I well knew that if it came from God, He would reward you tenfold for your humility and submission, while, on my part, I felt bound to redouble my prayers and other religious acts, that God would be pleased to enlighten my mind and strengthen my heart, should I have been guided by human feeling in this matter: and now,” added he, with emotion, “I must farther pray for grace to resign you, my love, for you are not long for this world.”

“Did God reveal this to you?” asked Geraldine, her countenance overspread with joy.

“He has given me the conviction that we are soon to part, and your soul is by far the most prepared.”

“Oh, no,” cried she: “it is you who are now imaginative; have you not been my guide and support through my Catholic life, and would you now seek to raise the pupil above her teacher? Dear Eustace, I have saddened your mind, and it turns on what would be your loss, and I dare not think would be yet my gain.”

“Then why that radiance over your face just now?”

“You took me quite by surprise, and I

thought only of God ; but indeed I am not fit to approach His adorable sanctity, and I ought to desire neither life nor death, but accept of either from His hands in perfect peace. Tell me why you have this impression that we are soon to part ?”

“ I have been retracing all the circumstances of your spiritual life,” replied De Grey, “ and see with gratitude that it has been rapidly progressive. You are now humble enough for me to recall without pain to you, how lofty and independent a mind you had, when first you consented to the yoke of obedience.”

“ And you were a brave man to undertake the task of controlling that proud spirit,” said Geraldine, smiling.

“ Oh,” cried De Grey also smiling, “ there was an excitement and charm in it.”

“ Which,” interrupted she playfully, “ you feel almost tempted to regret.”

“ Ah, Geraldine, you think to cheat me from the records of your life, but it is now my turn to be full of serious thought, and you must listen to me. The very force of mind which had enabled you to conquer all opposition in becoming a Catholic, made it a hard matter to submit to those Catholic practices which resulted from the truths you had received. You had, as the only child of an indulgent and admiring father, been the queen of your little world, and, although you were willing to extend to me the crown-matrimonial, when

it came to the yielding the sceptre, there was a struggle of the natural heart. You loved to relinquish your will to me as a boon, but not as my right ; and now, sweet Geraldine, you can listen to all this without upbraiding or tears, without even a reply, therefore I may continue my comments on your spiritual history. You did not, at one time, sufficiently feel the necessity of a pure intention in the benevolent actions you performed. The eagerness with which you sought success in every undertaking, and your emotion under any failure, proved that you had the double motive of glorifying both Almighty God and Lady De Grey. The true spirit of the hidden life was unknown to you, and that keen susceptibility to praise or blame which Catholics consider reprehensible, you had cherished as a virtuous refinement. A friend might misunderstand and misjudge you ; I might appear independent and forgetful of you in my pursuits, and your wounded feelings must be soothed, and your self-love appeased. Now, has the hidden life become so dear to you, the pure motive of seeking God alone become so precious to you, you have learned so truly to bless him in failure as in success, you are so detached from self, that the next step, detachment from creatures, is already prepared, and ‘ the dove ’ will fly to Heaven, never more to return.”

“ Eustace,” said Geraldine, “ if you rest your

forebodings of our parting from your too partial view of my progress towards sanctity, you need fear nothing, for the detachment of which you speak does not prevent my heart from bounding at your loved praise."

"I do not regret," continued De Grey, "having acted as I did when first you made known to me the secret of your solitary hours. We both know that the test of these favours in prayer are humility, simplicity, and peace; the mortification of our will and natural inclinations; and, above all, constant charity. Many weeks have passed since you sacrificed, from obedience, your sensible delight in prayer, confining yourself to humble petitions for divine guidance, and I have watched you more closely than ever. Henceforth I release you! Let your thoughts soar aloft amongst the spirits of your future home. God forbid that I, who may hitherto have been favoured to assist, should now retard, your progress towards Him."

Geraldine still held her husband's hand in silence, his presentiment of their approaching parting had partly gained its influence over her mind, yet she could not realize the idea of her death. After a long pause she said: "The belief that I am soon to die would be far better for my soul, than to remain incredulous to your prognostics, for although I endeavour, through the grace of God, to spend each day as though it were to be my last, yet I

should desire to make a more immediate preparation for the mighty change, if indeed it be near." Geraldine again paused in deep thought. "I do not think, Eustace," added she at length, "that you have ever much dreaded purgatory?"

"No," replied De Grey, "I have not; for in the first place we shall have there the certainty of salvation, which, in itself, must outweigh all the pain endured. We shall at the same time be free from all temptation, for the devil has there no power, and we shall be surrounded by none but holy souls, whose every feeling and desire will tend like our own to God."

"Yes," said Geraldine, "they are termed by the Church 'holy souls,' because they can no longer sin. They are constantly suffering, yet without murmuring, or impatience, or even reluctance, although hope deferred afflicteth the soul, and their intense longing after God must be far beyond anything we can feel in this life; for being there freed from all earthly affections, and filled with gratitude for the immense and unmerited boon of salvation, they must burn in the purifying flames of love, unknown before. Do you not think, added she, "that it is this painful desire of the soul to possess God, which has even caused the physical death of some saints? for some spiritual writers describe the soul, when in a religious transport, to be in pain, violent pain, from a sense of its detention from God."

“I think you are considering the fire of purgatory in too ethereal a sense,” said De Grey, “if you make the souls there, to be in a transport, which has ever been esteemed a high favour from God.”

“But like you,” said Geraldine, “I consider purgatory far superior to earth, and that a soul raised in a religious transport, is like the souls there detained, because she is freed from the material part, and raised to the wholly spiritual.”

“Yes,” said De Grey, “but the soul detained in the flesh, is so by the laws of nature, it is God’s will that the soul should be clothed with the flesh; and that his holy will should be unresistingly fulfilled in us, is the only, simple, yet comprehensive desire of the Christian. It is not his will, however, that the soul should become tarnished by sin, and therefore the flame of purgatory, which you would make to consist solely in the pain of detention from God, must surely be rendered more intense, by the conviction that our own corrupt will has been the cause.”

“As it is not positively defined by the Church,” continued De Grey, “that the element of fire is the instrument of purgation in the middle state, we are at liberty to suppose that these flames are spiritual: still, it is the general supposition of the fathers, that the fire of purgatory is the same in quality as that of hell, differing only in duration

and intensity. Saint Augustine even concludes, that the pains exceed all that the mind of man can conceive."

"It is very well," said Geraldine, "that the bulk of mankind, supported by such high authority, should take this view of the subject, which must produce by far the most lively terror to the vulgar mind. How in fact could a hardened sinner, who had never loved God, conceive any great torment, merely, from the full sense of having offended, and of being deprived of him? Still as the Church permits me to do so, I believe that to a spiritual essence, there can be only spiritual torment."

"This is my own belief," said De Grey, "and I therefore conclude that the torments of the damned can be material, only after the resurrection of their bodies, and the general judgment. But now let us walk," said he, starting up; "will you come to the Abbey?"

"The Abbey?" said Geraldine, smiling, "when we were both at holy communion this morning."

"I did not say that I was going into the confessional, when there," replied De Grey, returning her smile.

"Ah! but I know you are going to take ghostly counsel, and I pray, that our good father may send away all your forebodings, and all your sighs, my own Eustace, and while you are with him, I

will search along the bank of the river, for the wild plant you told me of."

They accordingly started on their evening walk, and Geraldine stole a frequent glance, to see whether her husband's countenance was losing its sadness. She was comforted to see it only thoughtful as they parted, and having fixed the extent to which she might wander, while expecting his return, she went with her basket and trowel in quest of this plant, of which De Grey had often spoken, as more beautiful than any they had yet found to adorn their last work, which was this: amongst the classical and religious figures which General Carrington had sent home from Italy, was a copy, in marble, of the beautiful kneeling Magdalen, by Canova; and Geraldine having ascertained that De Grey had no favourite project respecting the figure, besought him to admire her plan for the penitent. In a part of the grounds, termed the wilderness, was a natural cave, which at one time had been destined for an ice-house, but neglected in favour of an excavation in a cooler spot. This cave Geraldine proposed to render a fit habitation for the Magdalen, and, on De Grey's willing co-operation, the workmen cleared and planted as the higher powers directed, and Geraldine took for her branch of the labour, the transplanting, from other parts of the wilderness, every species of wild flower, to ornament the abode of

the penitent ; while De Grey planned and achieved the turning the course of a small rivulet, which now flowed, with every semblance of nature's sportive will, amidst the stones, and moss, and wild flowers, around the cave. A new plant from the river or Abbey hill was a prize, and Geraldine, on this evening, wandered for some time on the river banks, hoping to discover the crimson flower of which De Grey had spoken : but not seeing any of a different species from those already transplanted, she seated herself within view of the Abbey, and was soon immersed in deep thought.

Some of her husband's expressions, with the look which accompanied them, remained especially in her mind. "Henceforth I release you ! Let your thoughts soar aloft among the spirits of your future home. God forbid, that I, who have hitherto been favoured to assist, should now retard you."

"You have assisted me, dear Eustace," thought she, "and shall I ever own to myself that I can learn no more ? Ah ! far from me this presumption. It is not you who retard me, it is my own weak heart," and a rush of tender emotions swelled that heart, and overflowed her eyes, not unmingled with self upbraiding, that she could have lived so much apart in thought from him, during the last few months. "I knew not that he missed me," thought she ; "I knew not that I had become so

detached from every creature, the best, the nearest, dearest, till I found even his presence at times an interruption. I heard his footstep, and I fled—his voice, and I replied not. Ah, if it be indeed that I am beckoned onward by an Almighty hand, and hear the tones of an Almighty voice, the divine spouse will comfort the earthly one, even should the parting be by my death. Death! repeated she, —my death! or his? What is this foreboding, this knell, which is sounding in my heart. Is it the delusion of an overwrought imagination in us both, or is it a warning from our good angels? I know not, but our God, who knows, will teach and guide me.”

Nearly an hour thus passed in solitude and prayer, and when at length aroused by approaching footsteps, Geraldine beheld Mr. Bernard, unaccompanied by De Grey. “Is it prudent,” said he, “at this time of the evening, and by the river side, to be seated?”

“Where is he?” cried Geraldine, starting up in terror.

“Sir Eustace,” replied Mr. Bernard, “has charged me to conduct you homeward, on this side of the river, and promises to meet us at the bridge.”

“Where is he?” repeated Geraldine, and her heart beat violently.

“He has started for the opposite bank, in search of some wild plant, which he remembers to have

seen only on that side;—there ! is that he ? Yes ! Look along the upper path,—there he is ! and he sees you,—and waves his hand !”

Geraldine saw and returned the signal, and then moved homeward by the side of Mr. Bernard, her steps faltering, and the palpitation of heart increasing.”

“ You are ill, Lady De Grey,” said Mr. Bernard, “ you have lingered too long alone by the water side. The sight of your indisposition will grieve Sir Eustace, and make him as thoughtful as when he called at the Abbey. He looked quite cheerful when he ran off to the ferry, and promised, that in spite of the longer route, he would get the start of us.”

“ Let us walk faster,” said Geraldine, hastening her pace.

“ I will do whatever you wish,” said he ; and after a few minutes quicker walking, the bridge appeared in sight.

“ Mr. Bernard,” said Geraldine, “ did you intend to prolong your walk to the Hall with us ?”

“ I have a sick call,” said he, “ and after I shall have seen you safely with Sir Eustace, I must hasten on, for my penitent is at some distance, and near his end.”

“ I think,” said she, “ that you will remain with us.”

“ I hope,” said Mr. Bernard, smiling, “ that you would like me to be wherever my duty lies.”

"It will be with us," said Geraldine, and was then silent until they reached the appointed spot; when, in reply to some observation of Mr. Bernard's, "I did not expect to see him here," said she.

"How fine the river looks to-night," said Mr. Bernard.

Geraldine shuddered as she gazed on its clear and rippled surface, then suddenly clasping her hands, exclaimed, "Why loiter we here? you did not understand each other about the bridge, this is not the one he means." And she ran with a speed which Mr. Bernard could scarcely equal, across a meadow which was formed in the bend of the river, and by which they arrived within a few paces of a rustic bridge long in disuse, except by the inmates of a mill near to it.

Mr. Bernard, as he followed Geraldine, felt for the first time that the presentiment of evil, which filled her mind, was founded in some truth, as he had been cautioned not to trust to the bridge, by the peasant who had called him to the sick man. To Mr. Bernard's joy, however, just as he overtook our heroine, they both descried the object of their solicitude descending rapidly the copsewood hill, which overhung the river, his handkerchief filled with the roots of the crimson-flowering plant; and Mr. Bernard had time to shout "Do not trust the bridge, it is broken. Go back to the other."

De Grey having only caught the principal words, without the intermediate ones, which gave the true meaning, shouted in return, that his promises were not broken, and that they were quite to be trusted, and flourishing his prize over his head, he sprang from the high bank on the frail bridge.

Geraldine neither screamed nor spoke. The crash of the bridge under the impetus given to the weight of De Grey, had sounded in her brain before it fell on the outward ear. She saw him fall through the beams, and strike against the abutment of the arch; for an instant he sank in the water, but rising again, supported himself, by holding with one hand part of the bridge which remained firm, until he had untied his neckcloth, and then struck boldly for the shore. De Grey was an excellent swimmer, and when Mr. Bernard saw the vigorous stroke he made towards them, he exclaimed to Geraldine, "God be praised, all is well." The distance from the opposite bank would have been trifling, had De Grey returned thither, but he turned to his wife and friend, and soon narrowed the space between himself and them, till suddenly he stopped, raised his hand in signal for assistance, and was lost to their sight.

In four minutes from that time, the boat with two men from the mill was on the spot where De Grey had sunk, and Mr. Bernard, who had succeeded in arriving there by swimming, in time to

grasp and keep afloat the lifeless form at its third and last effort to the surface of the water, was unable through exhaustion to do more than enter the boat, after it had received his friend, and was conveyed thence by the men and laid on the bank beside him.

Geraldine, who had flown to the mill for assistance, the same instant in which Mr. Bernard had plunged into the river, and had watched every movement from the bank, now knelt between the two apparently lifeless bodies. That De Grey must die, she had felt convinced during the last two hours, in which from the struggle of her poor heart, and the violent action of her brain, which was a furnace of thought, she had seemed to live years. She now thought only of securing to that beloved and precious soul every spiritual aid, during the short time it might linger in its earthly tabernacle, and her agitation and grief were inexpressibly heightened by the state into which the priest had been thrown, by his generous devotion to his friend. One of the men had run back to the mill for a plank on which to place De Grey, and just as he again returned to them, Geraldine saw with fervent thanksgiving, that the restorative given by the other man to Mr. Bernard was taking effect. He raised himself on one arm, and turned to gaze on his friend, whom they were now placing on the board.

“He is dead, poor gentleman,” said one of the men, abruptly, “not by drowning, but by the blow;” and he pointed to the temple, in which a deep indenture had been made. “How he swam at all is a marvel.”

“Ah, no,” cried Geraldine, “he is not dead, he is only stunned and exhausted!” and as she spoke, a gush of warm and living blood flowed from the mouth of De Grey. “Yes! by that token he lives, for the blood of the dead is stagnant.”

They now bore him speedily, yet gently, forward. Geraldine supporting one arm, while Mr. Bernard, by great effort, kept pace with them, holding up the other. At the mill, Geraldine found, with thankfulness, an active, kind-hearted woman, and a boy, who was immediately sent off for either of the medical men in Elverton. A blazing fire was soon made, and every thing done to restore warmth and breath to the body; but if the flowing of the blood had given proofs of life, it seemed to have been the harbinger of its extinction, for the hitherto placid features were now taking the rigid form of death.

“Can you then anoint him in this uncertainty?” said Geraldine, seeing Mr. Bernard draw from his breast pocket the little case of holy oils prepared for the sick call.

“I can,” he replied; and the solemn rite was administered; one of the men, who was a Catho-

lic, kneeling beside our heroine, and joining her in the responses to the litany for the dying, which then followed. Geraldine's heart had swelled with gratitude, when re-assured of the validity of this last sacrament—this “consummation of penance,” in which the very root of evil is destroyed—although the dear object was insensible to the inestimable benefit bestowed, and a few scalding drops gathered in her hitherto tearless eyes, as she listened to the priestly dismissal:—“Depart Christian soul out of this world, in the name of God the Father Almighty, who created thee; in the name of Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, who suffered for thee; in the name of the Holy Ghost, who sanctified thee; in the name of the angels, archangels, thrones, and dominations, cherubim and seraphim; in the name of the patriarchs and prophets, of the holy apostles and evangelists; of the holy martyrs and confessors, of the holy monks and hermits, of the holy virgins; and of all the saints of God: let thy place be this day in peace, and thy abode in holy Sion, through Christ our Lord. Amen.” “I recommend thee, dear brother, to Almighty God, and leave thee to his mercy whose creature thou art; that having paid the common debt by surrendering thy soul, thou mayest return to thy Maker, who formed thee out of the earth. May all the ministers of hell be filled with confusion and shame, and let no evil

spirit dare to stop thee on thy way. Christ Jesus be thy deliverer, who was crucified for thee. Christ Jesus, Son of the living God, place thee in his garden of paradise, and may he, the true Shepherd, own thee for one of his flock: may he absolve thee from all thy sins, and place thee at his right hand in the inheritance of his elect. We pray it may be thy happy lot to behold thy Redeemer face to face, to be ever in his presence, and in the vision of that truth which is the joy of the blessed. And thus placed among those happy spirits, mayest thou be ever filled with heavenly sweetness. Amen."

Before the prayers were ended, the principal surgeon in Elverton arrived. He cast one look at De Grey, shook his head, and then turning to the priest, whispered his rapid questions. Geraldine drew a little back while the surgeon examined whether life were extinct, but in a few instants, advancing, she gently removed his hand, and bending over her husband, held up her finger in token of silence. Mr. Thompson replaced his hand, however, for an instant, then removing it, said softly, "All is over;" and Mr. Bernard uttered with deep emotion,—“To thee, Lord, we recommend the soul of thy servant Eustace, that being dead to this world, he may live to thee: and whatever sins he has committed through human frailty, we beseech thee in thy goodness mercifully to pardon, through Christ our Lord. Amen.”.....

“Grant, O God, that while we here lament the departure of thy servant, we may ever remember that we are most certainly to follow him. Give us grace to prepare for that last hour by a good life, that we may not be surprised by sudden death, but be ever watching when thou shalt call, that so with the Spouse we may enter into eternal glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”

As Mr. Bernard finished these prayers, both he and the surgeon endeavoured to lead Geraldine away from the mortal remains of her husband, but she calmly told them that the last sad duties belonged to her, and that she would devolve them on no one; and acquainting Mr. Thompson with the risk Mr. Bernard had incurred, bade him take charge of the living. This, Mr. Thompson did most effectually, by kindly undertaking to drive directly to the cottage, whither the priest was bound, having recommended to the latter to accept the offer made him by the miller of a bed in the cottage. Geraldine begged Mr. Thompson to convey the sad intelligence to the Hall; but with strict orders from herself, for no one to come to her until the morning, except Mr. Hilton, whom she would wish to see directly. With the miller's wife for her assistant, Geraldine then devoted her whole thoughts to the dear departed, and the kind woman consented to her wish, that as the corpse was to remain there only during the night, it should not be removed to any other room. Within an hour

the steward arrived, and Geraldine arranged with him for the early removal, on the following morning, of the body of De Grey to the Hall. The miller's wife having agreed to sit up with Geraldine, Mr. Hilton went immediately into the town, to expedite his melancholy commission, and Mr. Bernard remained with our heroine in the chamber of death.

"Tell me," said Geraldine, in a low voice, "is the presence of God more immediately on the spot when the soul quits the body; or is it, that the impediment of the flesh being then removed, the soul enters into the omnipresence of the Deity?"

"The latter is correct," said Mr. Bernard; "God is everywhere."

"In one moment," continued Geraldine, "has the soul of my Eustace entered into the beatific vision, has been judged, and then, perhaps, parted from the God, he, for the first time, could fully know and love. Alas ! alas ! where art thou, precious soul?"

"Be comforted;—nay, more, lift up your heart in thankfulness," said Mr. Bernard; "sudden as was the summons to the judgment-seat, it found the soul prepared; and, although I could not with authority pronounce that it has entered into the eternal blessedness of the just made perfect, I feel that short, if any, will be the period of detention from the God who reigned paramount in his faithful heart."

“I was conscious,” said Geraldine, “of the moment in which his soul entered on eternity. I knew that, although my dull mortal ears could not hear it, yet the sentence was then passed for endless joy or woe, on the best, the dearest of friends, and my heart cried for him, ‘mercy, mercy!’ for on that alone can man rely. I am comforted,” added she, “by your assurance of his acceptance; not that I feared for him the condemnation of the wilful sinner. Yet never did the unattainable sanctity and purity of God appear so clearly to my mind—never have I felt, with such trembling awe, that nothing defiled can enter heaven. Blessed to me now is the remembrance of my husband’s fidelity to all the means of grace afforded him by the Church: his constant and loving surrender of himself to the will of God in all things; his desire to unite his sufferings, whether of mind or body, to those of his blessed Redeemer; his sincere and deep humility. Ah! when we know that by thus faithfully responding to the grace freely given us, we can claim the sure promises of God, and that by patience in suffering, labours of love, austerities, and mortifications, we can anticipate our purgatory, and in death fly instantly to our God, what can seem difficult or painful to us?”

On the following morning the body of De Grey was borne to the Hall, there to await the time for interment in the vault of the abbey.

During the visits made to De Grey's paternal inheritance, our heroine had become acquainted with a lady in that immediate neighbourhood, whose pious and benevolent life, literary and elegant tastes, and the high esteem in which she was held by Mr. Bernard, had so insured the friendship and confidence of Geraldine and her husband, that during the last two years, Isabel Lester, who had little expected to revive thus the ardent attachments of earlier life, became a constant visitor at the Moat or Hall. To this congenial friend did our heroine now turn, and a confidential messenger was dispatched to her, and also to De Grey's venerable relative at Burnleigh.

The widowed Geraldine, much exhausted in mind and body, continued through that day in a state of almost stupor, but in the evening was roused by the presence of Lady Winefride, and as she looked in her aged countenance, which quivered with emotion, and remembered the all but maternal tie which had bound her heart with that of her nephew, she forgot her own still greater loss, and strove to be the comforter.

"I have prayed for greater strength than I seem now to possess," said Lady Winefride, "for I came not to weep, but to receive and soothe your tears, my poor child."

"I cannot weep," said Geraldine, "I am stunned, and feel nothing." Yet, as Lady Wine-

fride drew her by degrees to speak, not of the horrors of yesterday's scene, but of the qualities and piety of De Grey, and of the general loss sustained, she began to lose the wild melancholy of her air and countenance, and to evincè something of the natural grief which her tender friends desired to see. While they were sitting together, a tap was given at the door, and Jane Saunders, who was in the room, answering the summons, a whispered debate took place, whether or not to show something to "my lady."

"What is it, Jane," said Lady Winefride.

"The head man at the mill has sent this for my lady," replied Jane; "but it is odd to be insisting on her seeing such things as flowers at this time of her affliction."

Lady Winefride, however, took from the footman's hand a China flower-pot, in which grew several wild plants: their flowers, which were of a rich crimson, being tied to, and clustering round a painted stick. The delicate care and sympathy which this evinced, from persons of a class not in general prone to the sensibilities of grief, was felt by the grateful heart of Geraldine, for well she recognized these flowers. She bent over them, and the spring was touched which opened the floodgates of her sorrow.

"I did not remark till this moment what the flower was," said Jane to Lady Winefride; "but

it is all in keeping with my lady's grief, it is the flower of 'Love lies bleeding.' "

" Jane," said our heroine at length, " there was a handkerchief—"

" There was, my lady ; it has been returned. It was one of those marked with your hair."

" Take it," said Geraldine, " and bid the miller and his wife keep it in remembrance of the virtues of the dead, and of the gratitude of the living. Dear aunt," added she, " shall I conduct you now to the room where our Eustace lies ?"

Lady Winefride had only waited till the proposal should come from Geraldine, and they now together visited the chamber of death, and gazed on the countenance where the parting soul had left the impress of its acceptance with God. After some time spent in prayer, they withdrew, to allow free entrance to the train of devout poor, who had, as if by general impulse, flocked to pray around the body of De Grey ; and as these, for the sake of order, were admitted in small numbers at a time, it was not until a late hour that the last were dismissed, and the household resumed their watchings, two at a time, being relieved each hour. Geraldine had consented to retire to rest, but she had fixed on her own hour to watch with her faithful Isabel, without the knowledge of Lady Winefride, who might either have opposed it, or have offered to be with her, which she did not wish, and she

laid her injunctions upon Isabel, that she should remain in the adjoining room until she should be summoned. At the hour of midnight Geraldine returned to the chamber of death, bearing a case which contained the correspondence between herself and De Grey during their short engagement, and the few intervals of separation which had occurred during their four years' union. Across the case she had thrown her long hair, which she had just cut off, and she now laid both the letters and hair beside him in the coffin, saying, "My God, I desire from this moment to consecrate my whole being to thee, and that henceforth this dear being may live in my heart only as he is absorbed in thee, to whom it is due. Thou hast taught me the weakness of this heart, and therefore I rely not on any strength of my own, but wholly on thy powerful grace, which has hitherto so wonderfully supported me."

Geraldine well knew that these letters would become tenfold more precious when the hand that wrote, and the heart and head that dictated, them, were mouldering in the tomb, and she therefore made the sacrifice while it was comparatively slight. She arose from her knees, and bent over the coffin, and a slight shudder ran through her frame, as she perceived a change to have taken place. She looked more intently on the countenance, which a few hours since had preserved its

noble outline and heavenly expression, and saw that the full eyelid had sunk, and the marble whiteness of the skin was discoloured. On the wounded temple especially, corruption had begun its work: and a rush of tender remembrances, and the full sense of her bereavement, mingled with pity and remorse, overcame her as she looked on the letters which, in the previous elevation of her thoughts, she had renounced. She placed her hand on De Grey's unchanged and clustering locks, and the strong and natural wish, which she had hitherto denied herself, of keeping one of them, returned with such force, that drawing forth her scissors, she prepared to select a curl, when a sudden mysterious terror, unknown before, made her recoil. Deeply impressed with awe at this token, as it seemed, that her attempt was displeasing to the departed spirit, it was some minutes before she could reason herself into the contrary belief; but having at length done so, she again leaned over the corpse, when the same mysterious terror returned with such force, that, shrinking back, she sought, with faltering steps, the door, and ere she could open it, sank insensible on the floor.

When Geraldine recovered, she found herself lying on her bed, with Lady Winefride and Isabel on each side of her. The former gently reproached her, for undertaking what was beyond

her strength, and then tried to banish the painful subject; but our heroine, fearing lest this weakness on her part might produce a bad effect on Isabel, informed them both of the real cause of her fainting, adding, "I have been led by the grace of God to desire, for the rest of my days, to be wholly consecrated to him. He has given me strength under this affliction, which has seemed to me a token that he accepts my desire. In resigning my first and dearest earthly affections, I have wished to make of them a perfect holocaust, and for this end I determined to resign, with the loved object, every thing that should render the sacrifice imperfect. So long as I was faithful to this feeling, I was so raised in spirit to that of the dear departed, as scarcely to dwell on the mortal remains. I have spent hours alone in that room by night as by day, and never till I relapsed into fond regret did I experience any awful fear. God then rebuked me, as it were, by the same hovering spirit, before which my own trembled and was lost."

The day on which the remains of Eustace De Grey were borne to the vault beneath the chapel of the Abbey, a multitude of all classes and of all denomination of Christians, joined the Catholics of Elverton, being desirous, not only to show their respect for the dead, but their sympathy likewise for the living. Several private friends had arrived also at the Hall, and Geraldine consented to see them, and to listen to them, and to do all that

was required of her ; for the strength so wonderfully given her continued, and she felt assured would continue, so long as it should be required for the fulfilment of any duty. Her uncle Edmund attended the funeral, and the Warden received her on her return from her sad office of chief mourner, with his warmest tone and look of approbation, at the self-control and courage she evinced. This courage, he trusted, would continue, for it was unaccompanied by hurry or excitement, and appeared to result from the calm surrender of her happiness into the hands of God. After the departure of her uncle and Mr. Everard, who, with the faithful steward, had conveyed a handsome reward to the inmates of the mill, and had relieved her of all painful business, except the one letter to General Carrington, Geraldine had still the comfort of Lady Winefride's, and of Isabel's congenial society, but she did not require this constantly, and would unconsciously remain for hours in thought, or occupied by the perusal of some deep works of mystical divinity, which Mr. Bernard, for the first time, placed in her hands. That Geraldine intended, or rather hoped, to enter the religious life, was Isabel's firm persuasion, but Lady Winefride doubted whether such were the will of God ; and while these two attached friends discoursed together, on the object of their solicitude, a change was taking place in her state of feeling, as painful as it was mysterious.

CHAPTER XI.

The mystic sounds mid silence that abide,
The whisperings hoarse of wilder'd memory.

To the elevation of Geraldine's thoughts, and the attendant peace of her heart, now succeeded interior trials the most acute. Instead of that immediate presence of God, in which she seemed to live, move, and have her being, she appeared far removed from him,—nor was this desolation all. There came, like strokes of fire across her heart and brain, the self-upbraiding thought, that she had caused the death of her husband. Had she not often wished to live for God alone, and had not that continued wish been equivalent to a prayer for his decease? Then came the vivid remembrance of every word, or look, or even silence, that might have grieved him, followed by the last scene of his life. She saw his animated countenance, and manly form, vigorous in recovered hopes; she again heard his joyous shout, and saw him leap on the fatal plank, receive the cruel blow from the fall, and yet swim towards her. Oh!

had he not done so, but turned from her to the nearer bank, the blood-vessels of the chest would not have burst :—and it was she who, by her ill-timed presence, had thus hurried him into eternity !—she, who so well knew his thoughts on death, and the preparation he would have desired to make. Had he done so, his spirit would have flown direct to God ; but now it pines, and suffers ! and as she rested on these harrowing thoughts, the wail of the ‘ Miserere,’ as she had heard it in the Sistine Chapel, five years before, seemed to float around her, and in it his voice could be distinguished. The recurrence at shorter intervals, and then the continuance of these agonizing thoughts, gave a troubled restless motion to her eyes, and a wild air to her whole manner, which deeply affected and alarmed the few who were admitted to see her ; and at length she revealed to Mr. Bernard, that she expected to lose her senses under this mental trial. “ I resigned my best and dearest friend,” cried she, “ to what I thought the will of God, but I am now harassed by the belief, that it was not the will of God, but that in anger he gave me my own will, and that I have killed De Grey.”

“ Have you struggled against these thoughts ?” said Mr. Bernard.

“ I have,” she replied ; “ at first I believed them to come from the enemy, but now they appear to be truth.”

“ You must still believe them to come from the enemy of your soul,” said Mr. Bernard. “ In the eternal councils of God, the term of your husband’s life was fixed ; and to soften the bereavement to you, a strengthening grace was previously vouchsafed you, by which you were enabled to love God supremely, and the creature only in him. This, his great mercy, the enemy is endeavouring to hide from your eyes, that he may disturb and wound your soul. Do not trust yourself to reason with the tempter ; say to him, “ Get thee hence, Satan !”

“ But,” said Geraldine, “ it is very true, that during several months, I have wished that I could consecrate myself wholly to God, and what was this, but wishing the death of my husband ? Oh ! Mr. Bernard,” cried she, suddenly, “ had we gone over that first bridge, and joined him on the bank where he then was, his precious life would have been preserved.”

“ Had Sir Eustace not ventured to cross the water, Almighty God would have employed some other means to fulfil his irrevocable design,” said Mr. Bernard. “ Do you believe that the purposes of God can be frustrated by our little plans ? or, that He requires us for their fulfilment ?”

“ When I look on my affliction in that light,” said Geraldine, “ my heart is at peace, because to fulfil the adorable will of God, is all I desire ; but

to have led Eustace into danger, instead of saving him, is agony to me."

"Remember," said Mr. Bernard, "that if the sight of you induced him to attempt to reach the farthest bank, you were there by his own request."

Geraldine only replied by deep sighs.

"Lady De Grey," said Mr. Bernard, "I have scarcely ever attended a death-bed, where the minds of the affectionate attendants were not harassed by the afflicting thought of some mismanagement on their part. The only way to meet these painful interior suggestions, is by the firm conviction, that if the intention be pure, there is no act, on the part of the creature, which has not fulfilled the will of the Creator. I once witnessed an extraordinary instance of faith under a trial of this kind. A Catholic gentleman who was one of my penitents was on the eve of marriage, when he was seized with a violent fever. His own family, consisting of a mother and two sisters, attended him night and day, but his affianced bride was not permitted by her parents to incur the risk of seeing him, till, at length, having overcome their fears, she visited the sick room. The patient had been that morning pronounced out of danger, and to gratify his new nurse, she was left by the family to sit alone by him, and to give him his fever draught. She gave him laudanum by mistake, and he never spoke again. In the midst of the lamentations, out-

cries, and upbraidings of the distracted family, she stood as if stunned by grief, till, at length, raising her hands and eyes to Heaven, she said, ‘Lord, as thou willest, in the manner thou willest, and by whom thou willest.’ She afterwards said to me, ‘I would have given my heart’s-blood to save him, but God, who sees that heart, will not let it repine.’

“I think of this young lady,” added Mr. Bernard, “when I hear the customary ‘Ah ! if another medical person had but been called in,’ or, on the contrary, ‘would that we had never consulted other advice.’ ‘If he had but been sooner moved ;’ or, ‘would that he had never been moved, &c.’ All this is opposed to the principle of true simple faith ; for I repeat it, supposing that a better plan had been acted upon, God would still have accomplished His inscrutable designs, in spite of prudence and skill, and every human device.”

“I cannot,” said Geraldine, “derive all the comfort you expect from the heroic faith of the lady whose example you propose to me, because her heart absolved her, and mine does not absolve me.”

“Why did you fly with such speed from one bridge to the other ?” said Mr. Bernard. “Was it not to warn or rescue your husband from danger ? Why did you in like manner seek the boat and

men at the mill? Would you not willingly have risked your own life to save his?"

"Not only have risked it, but have freely given it," replied she, but her sighs continued.

"The lady, whose example I proposed to you," said Mr. Bernard, "had to bear the reality of that trial, which, with you, is but imaginary. She was actually the cause (humanly speaking) by which the soul of the being she best loved, was at once launched into eternity!"

"But she had never wished his death," repeated our poor heroine, the wild melancholy returning to her eye.

"Neither have you," replied Mr. Bernard; "and, however you may deceive and bewilder yourself, by an over-timorous conscience, you cannot in this matter deceive and bewilder your confessor. I now put you under obedience, to drive these thoughts from your mind, as instantly and resolutely as you would do those contrary to faith or purity, and I warn you, that if you do not obey, you will actually receive the punishment due to self-will; you will become, on that one topic, insane."

"I think it very likely," said Geraldine, "for insanity is caused by the perpetually dwelling on one point, and that is what I have done lately."

"It is not likely, unless by your own fault," said Mr. Bernard; "and remember that any indul-

gence for the future will be more than imprudent, it will be highly reprehensible. Exert the force of mind given you by Almighty God. Open your heart to all his rich and abundant gifts, and merit the return of interior peace. Heaviness may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."

"Do you think," said Geraldine, "that this extreme pain and desolation of the soul is sent me as a punishment for my sins, or as a trial of my fidelity?"

"In whichever light we view it," said Mr. Bernard, "you may draw from it great profit: looking at this withdrawal from you of the light and joy you have hitherto enjoyed, as a punishment due to you for many transgressions, you may view in it a portion of your purgatory, and receive it with the perfect submission and love which fills those holy souls who are there detained. How often have you said that you desired your soul might here go through its purifying process, and so in death fly instantly to God; this can be in no way better effected than by interior trials and affliction. Compared with the internal cross of dereliction, all exterior crosses are light; and whether you bear it in expiation of the past, or as a proof of your fidelity for the future, rest assured that God's fatherly love has laid it on you; that he hears all your sighs, receives all your tears, and

having made you a partaker in the sufferings of his Son, will bid you rejoice with him in glory."

Geraldine left her spiritual father with a mind less oppressed ; for a slight glimpse of light seemed discernable in the hitherto impenetrable gloom, discovering to her "how a desolate person ought to offer herself into the hands of God ;" and by that light she prayed, "O Lord God, O Holy Father, be thou now and for ever blessed, for as thou wilt so it has happened, and what thou dost is always good.

" ' O just Father, holy and always to be praised, the hour is come for thy servant to be tried. " O Father, worthy of all love, it is fitting that thy servant should at this time suffer something for thee. ' " *

Mr. Bernard had recommended to her not to remain too long in solitude, but to have some friend generally with her, and she followed this recommendation as a mean to enable her better to obey his positive commands, of driving from her those agonizing thoughts which had gained such power over her. She had now a personal interest in the truth, that the progress of a spiritual life does not so much consist in having the grace of consolation, as in bearing the want of it with humility, patience, and resignation : so as not to grow remiss in the exercise of prayer at that time, nor to omit any accustomed good work.

* A Kempis.

Months passed on, and our courageous Geraldine went through all her duties with the same exactness as when they had been delightful to her. She earnestly desired such purity of motive, as not to love God for the sake of his favours, but for his adorable perfections; and to be faithful to this love in tribulation and anguish, becoming a partaker of his sufferings, and admitted to drink of his bitter chalice. Resisting therefore all temptation to disgust, and consenting to feel the utmost aridity and weariness, she continued her usual exercises of mental and vocal prayer, attended mass daily, with the greater part of her household, received every week the Holy Communion, and either visited, with Isabel, the schools, the workhouse infirmary, and the private dwellings of the sick poor, or engaged with her in some work for the altar, that should occupy her thoughts. Her depression continued, but she made no violent efforts to dispel it, leaving its termination to the inscrutable wisdom of her God; and being thus faithful to the grace of resignation given her, it led the way to the return, at length, of her wonted cheerful calm. Poor Isabel, who had wept, and suffered much from sympathy, now knew no bounds to her joy, but Geraldine reminded her that they must not depend too much on the prosperity of the soul, but remain humble, knowing how quickly it may be changed into adversity. But although Geraldine had learned

to rejoice with trembling, still she did rejoice, feeling that if God vouchsafed her the return of his consolations, she was bound to offer him a heart full of thanksgiving, and leaving to him the duration of this renewed peace, to let nothing be wanting on her part to merit its continuance.

Lady Winefride now took leave of the Hall, to return to her home duties, which had been delegated to others till Geraldine should appear able to spare her. On the day of her departure, our heroine proposed, for the first time, to walk in the pleasure grounds, and she led Isabel to the cave of the Magdalen, in the wilderness; the crimson flowers had been planted at the entrance, and were recovering this their second removal. Geraldine entered the cave, and there, unexpectedly to herself, and with grief to her friend, she had one of those bursts of emotion, which, however alarming to witness, are beneficial to the sufferer, especially where sorrow has been aggravated by interior trials.

CHAPTER XII.

In monasteries the weak and timorous may be happily sheltered, the weary may repose, and the penitent may meditate. Those retreats of prayer and contemplation have something so congenial to the mind of man, that, perhaps, there is scarcely one that does not purpose to close his life in pious abstraction, with a few associates serious as himself.

Dr. Johnson.

AFTER the departure of Lady Winefride, Isabel being left sole guardian, continued to watch her friend with anxiety, listening for the slightest sigh, and marking each passing shadow on her brow. Geraldine appeared not only calm but cheerful; and this blessed change had lasted several weeks, yet she was no longer what she had been. "Perhaps," thought Isabel, "I am wrong to expect this:" and on her thinking aloud one day on this subject, Geraldine comforted her by the assurance of her happiness.

"You must not be anxious because I remain so long silent, Isabel," said she, "I am not more silent than yourself."

"I am silent," replied Isabel, "because I have nothing to say."

“ You have always plenty of wise things to say,” said Geraldine, smiling.

“ No, indeed,” said Isabel, “ I am thought wise merely because I know how to be silent ; but you, dear friend, can speak, and confirm the opinion.”

“ Alas ! I have said more foolish things than wise ones,” said Geraldine, “ and may well learn thus late the advantages of holy silence. Be comforted to know, dear Isabel, that of the many thoughts which now occupy my mind, some are full of happiness, and none painful.”

“ Tell me those which are full of happiness,” said Isabel.

“ They relate,” replied Geraldine, “ to the dedication, which I hope to make, of my whole being to God.”

Isabel looked first at Geraldine, then round the costly and luxurious apartment : her thoughts then flew to the convent, where she had been a pensioner, and she shook her head with a meaning which Geraldine could not mistake. “ You think,” said she, “ that I shall find the exterior hardships of the religious life too much, from my previous habits of self-indulgence?”

“ I fear so,” said Isabel. “ The early education of Catholics and Protestants differs greatly. The former are inured to practise exterior as well as interior self-denial at a very early age. They are taught to bear cold and hunger, and to dread a luxurious life, as imparting its effects to the soul.”

“Come with me,” cried Geraldine, rising, and leading the way to the apartment next to her boudoir, and which Isabel knew to be her sleeping-room.

“I see nothing here to make me change my opinion,” said Isabel; “this is a room more fitted for a fairy queen than a saintly nun.”

Geraldine smiled, and permitted Isabel to amuse herself for some time at her expense, as she made the tour of the room, examining and commenting on each luxury she beheld. At length, taking from within a cabinet a large key, Geraldine unlocked the door of a light closet, and as Isabel entered, the door was closed on her, and she found herself alone in the facsimile of a cell belonging to some austere order. A small iron bedstead, without curtains, and with a straw bed, one chair, and small table of deal, an iron crucifix, with cup for holy water hanging against the wall, completed the furniture of this closet or cell, of which the dimensions might be about eight feet long by five or six wide.

After leaving Isabel for some time to enjoy alone this surprise, Geraldine found her kneeling before the crucifix, bathed in tears.

“These are tears of joy, I trust, at my progress thus far?” said our heroine, as Isabel arose and threw her arms round her neck.

“How long have you slept on that dreadful little bed?” said Isabel.

“For several weeks,” replied Geraldine, “but I began prudently and by degrees. At first I lay only one hour on this little bed, and took my actual night’s rest on my accustomed down pillows and French mattress; but by the end of the first week, I found myself awaking from a good sleep on the straw bed, and now I am independent of any other.”

“But the weather is becoming intensely cold,” pleaded Isabel, “and at the risk of life must you endure this unnecessary rigour? If you intend to become a Sister of Charity, you need not attempt the austerities of the contemplative orders, for the hardships of that life are sufficient, and more than sufficient, to satisfy your desire of mortification.”

“I do not know that I shall become a Sister of Charity,” said Geraldine; “on the contrary, I have many doubts on that subject, and desire to know more of all the religious orders before I decide.”

“They are all good and holy,” observed the “Convent girl.”

“But the Benedictine order best of all,” said Geraldine, smiling.

“I am bound to think it one of the best,” replied Isabel, “as all must do who have been educated by those religious. The recluse, who educates others for the world, seems to me to be leading a most pious life.”

“I have the highest respect,” said Geraldine, “for those who, having themselves abjured the world, can prepare others for it, without losing the spirit of their higher state.”

“It is quite essential to the well-being of the Catholic body,” said Isabel, “that the females of the higher ranks should be educated in a manner suited to their station, without endangering the far more important cause of piety: and for this end, how great a blessing is it that ladies of the same rank as their pupils should be called, by the grace of God, to devote themselves to this good work. They must possess great advantages over the most amiable and accomplished mistress of a boarding-school, whose mind is generally harassed by contending cares and anxieties; and who with children or other relations dependent on her exertions, can give to her pupils but a divided heart. The nun, on the contrary, gives them her unremitting labours from the noblest and purest motives; looking on them as sacred deposits, to be guarded from spot or blemish, and strengthened by precept and example for the dangers they are to encounter in the world. And how endearing is the tie,” continued Isabel, “thus formed between the mistress and the pupil! Equals in birth and association, the experience of the former must be far more willingly received by her young listener than if she exhorted from theory alone.”

“Isabel,” said Geraldine, “you speak with the eloquence of a vocation.”

“No,” said Isabel, “I have no vocation at present but to comfort you, my dearest friend.”

“In which you respond most faithfully to the inspiration,” said Geraldine; “and may God reward you, for I cannot.”

“You must not think,” continued Isabel, “that I forget the merit of other orders devoted to tuition,—the Ursulines especially.”

“I believe your mind and charity expansive enough,” said Geraldine, “to see the merit of every order, and to admire with me their number and variety, among which the most opposite dispositions may find themselves suited; and all unite to praise and glorify God, edify mankind, and secure their own salvation. Now, much as I admire those orders which are devoted to education, I feel no direct sympathy with, but, on the contrary, the greatest repugnance to, them. I cannot teach anything for the silly world I renounce; and to all that may be said respecting the accomplishments I possess, I reply, that I devote them to sacred subjects, and thereby offer them more directly to God. I have not the same, or indeed any, repugnance to teach the poor, because the simple means are soon attained of enabling them to receive religious instruction, the imparting which could never weary me.”

“And yet,” said Isabel, “the accomplishments you cannot bear to teach for the ‘silly world you renounce,’ might tend to glorify the Almighty by giving influence to the characters of your pupils. To those destined to mix in society, as at present constituted, they would extend the sphere of usefulness, by giving lustre to example, and weight to precept, thus promoting God’s honour and their neighbour’s good. Much, I think, could be said on this subject,—the preparing the daughters of the higher Catholics for their arduous and important duties. ‘Happy is the man,’ says a French poet, ‘to whom God grants a holy mother;’ and surely, without the intellectual attainments that society demands, a Catholic wife in the present day would hardly realize the picture of the valiant woman in *Proverbs*, whose husband is honourable at the gates when he sitteth among senators.* But if you have so great a repugnance to elegant tuition,” continued Isabel, “and still have doubts respecting the order of charity, to which institute do you incline? surely not to the austere orders of Mount Carmel, La Trappe, or the Poor Clares?”

“There is one convent of the Benedictines,” said Geraldine, “where, besides the duties of the choir, there is perpetual adoration before the blessed Sacrament, of an hour assigned in turn to each nun; and, instead of any school attached to the

* C. xxxi. v. 23.

convent, they engage in every variety of work for the service of the altar. I have seen, in various parts of the kingdom, vestments and antependiums beautifully embroidered by these religious; and the calm and holy contemplation of that convent strongly attracts me."

"But surely," said Isabel, "you would not there find sufficient mental occupation; and the powers given you by God would lie dormant."

"How could the powers of my mind lie dormant," said Geraldine, "when they would be exercised in the perpetual contemplation and praise of God?"

"But you would be comparatively useless to your fellow-creatures," said Isabel.

"Why, my 'Convent girl,'" said Geraldine, "is it you who are talking like a Protestant, of the inutility of the Contemplative Orders! Never has a country been more spiritually prosperous than when its holy bands of contemplatives were imploring blessings on it; and well has it been said, that many a victory has been gained, less by the tactics of generals and valour of soldiers, than by the hands, raised like those of Moses, during the combat; and this is particularly applicable to the convent in question, where all their devotions and ansterities are, besides securing their own salvation, devoted to the reconversion of England. I think, that instead of any more Reformation meet-

ings, that party had far better burn down this convent, and stop the prayers of its community, as the best means of impeding the present rapid spread of Catholicity."

"Indeed, I do not think the contemplative orders useless to their fellow-creatures," said Isabel, "for I trust much more to prayer than to action; but, I think with you, that different orders are for different minds. To those whom God calls to the wholly contemplative life, He has imparted a peculiar grace; to those destined for a union of the active and contemplative, He also gives the required powers, and to the wholly active——"

"Spare me, Isabel," interrupted Geraldine, seating herself, and folding her hands together, "the very mention of a life of perpetual motion makes me feel as though I could kneel in the sanctuary for ever."

"And yet," said Isabel, smiling, "who was it raised enthusiasm even in my sluggish feelings, by her glowing picture of the daughters of St. Vincent, and has so often told me, that she could not die happy, until she had fulfilled all the spiritual and corporal works of mercy?"

"It was I," cried Geraldine; "I felt and still feel, that however holy may be the prayers, and acceptable the austerities, of the contemplative orders, to none are there such sure promises given as to those who serve Christ in the suffering mem-

bers of his mystical body ; for to those expressly will He say, ‘ Come, ye blessed of my Father, receive the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world : for I was hungry, and you gave me to eat ; thirsty, and you gave me to drink ; naked, and you clothed me ; sick and in prison, and you came unto me. Verily I say unto you, that, inasmuch as you did it unto the least of my brethren, you did it unto me.’ ”

“ And how is it possible,” said Isabel, “ that with these strong impressions in favour of this order, you can think of any other ? ”

“ Because,” said Geraldine, “ on the other hand, I remember those equally encouraging words, ‘ But one thing is needful, and Mary hath chosen that better part which shall not be taken from her.’ ”

“ Indeed, it would be hard to decide,” said Isabel, “ between the two blessed sisters.”

“ And for that reason,” said Geraldine, “ I wish there were an order in which these two states of life were united, and why should not that be ? In the cloistered orders, the active duties of the community occupy several hours of the day ; and why should it be supposed, that these duties being out of the enclosure, for instance, at the hospitals, prisons and private dwellings of the poor, should render them incompatible with those of the choir ?

“ Isabel,” cried she, suddenly, with all the ani-

mation of earlier days, "I must found an order, for, notwithstanding the number and variety in the Church, I find no one that exactly combines all that my heart desires."

Isabel, who watched the change in her friend's countenance, and therefore wished to prolong the subject, replied, smiling, "that she should like a sketch of this order, for, that she could not imagine how one institute could combine all the desires of any heart, especially such a heart as Geraldine's."

"This institute," said Geraldine, "shall be a union of the active and contemplative life. In the former I will adopt all that is effected by the blessed Sisters of Charity, and in the latter the choir office, the meditation, and the silence of the cloistered orders. I have been frequently with Lady Winefride to the convent where dear Angela is now first-class mistress of the young ladies' school. If she can combine the active duties of tuition with the long divine office, why should not my nuns attend the hospitals and private dwellings of the poor at regular hours? Now, let us return to the library, and I will give you a written sketch of what I mean, and I will make you so far satisfied with my plans, as to feel within you the stirrings of a vocation, which, however, must not advance too rapidly, and outstrip me who am fettered by obedience to father Bernard.

Had Geraldine been aware at this time of all

that had passed between Mr. Bernard and De Grey during their last interview, she would have found it still more difficult to refrain from deciding on the order she hoped either to join or to found; but Mr. Bernard, in the present state of her feelings, which were still jarred and excited by the terror and grief she had sustained, would not mention anything that might bias them too strongly; and while, like Isabel, he encouraged her to think of the religious life as that to which God visibly called her, he had induced her to keep her mind, if possible, from any determined preference. During the raging of the cholera in Elverton, mentioned in the opening of this narrative, Mr. Bernard had applied to a congregation of Sisters of Charity in France, called the "Daughters of Saint Joseph," for three of their members, to assist him. Those selected by the mother-superior were English women, and on their return to France, one of them had informed Mr. Bernard, that should he ever establish an institute of their kind in Elverton, her sisters and herself would join it, having always hoped to return to their native country, where their labours would be doubly required, and not being bound to their congregation by more than yearly vows. Since that period Mr. Bernard had been constantly cherishing the hope, that the time would come when a convent for religious sisters, devoted to the

sick and ignorant poor, should arise, as the chapel and priest's house had done, within the ruins of the abbey; and in the mean time, several pious and benevolent ladies had given him their services amongst the poor at Elverton, with the promise of an entire dedication of themselves to this life when a regular order should be established.

De Grey, aware that his friend and pastor had this convent much at heart, often conversed with him on the subject, and on the eventful evening recounted, he spoke more decidedly of his own feelings as connected with it. "These Abbey lands," said he, "were given by my ancestor Arthur De Grey, in perpetuity, to the monks of the Cistercian order here established, in the reign of Henry the Second. At the revolt against the Church, these lands were parcelled out to lay apostates, together with all that the Abbey afforded of treasure and relics. You well know how I returned thanks to God, that, with the remnant of my hereditary fortune, I was enabled to purchase, seven years ago, this sacred spot from the corporation of the town, and that, but for the long contested struggle for the property left to me by my uncle, Mr. Richmond, I should long since have aided you in the reestablishment of a religious order within these walls. A thickly populated country is now around us, and other circumstances make it advisable that an active order of women

should succeed to the learned contemplatives of Saint Bernard. You have reasoned me into the belief that I am not to be left the desolate being I expected, and if, indeed, I am still to retain the wife I have been given grace to resign, I can only spare from my fortune sufficient for the erection of the building; but if this mysterious impression prove true, and I be left a widower, then rely on a foundation for your community. Last of my race, I require no more than the little estate of the Moat while living, and to lie when dead in the vault beneath this Abbey."

Mr. Bernard did not intend to conceal eventually this conversation from the widowed Geraldine, but merely to delay imparting it to her until her mind should have regained strength sufficient to hold the balance equal, while he should represent to her the sign, which, in this spontaneous wish of her husband's, seemed to him to be given her, that she should accomplish the good work De Grey had projected. This silence on the part of Mr. Bernard was caused likewise by conscientious and delicate feelings, which led him to avoid even the appearance of working on a mind and heart rendered by grief susceptible of every religious impression.

At the expiration of the first year of her widowhood, Geraldine wrote to the superiors of those convents to which she had been invited, accepting

the hospitality offered her, and she would fain have taken her friend Isabel with her, but the cautious convent girl would not expose herself to the reputation or even suspicion of a vocation, with all its consequences; and our heroine therefore began her journey with Jane Saunders for her companion, having promised Mr. Bernard, that she would decide nothing, without first seeing or writing to him. On the eve of her journey, Geraldine had been put in possession of De Grey's wishes respecting the future convent in the Abbey, and had instantly dedicated to that purpose the fortune, which, by De Grey's marriage-settlement, had become her's. The communication thus made occupied her mind greatly during her journey, and, notwithstanding her yearnings after a greater seclusion from the world, she felt willing to renounce this preference, could she but know that the life of a sister of charity was that to which God called her. Her first visit was to a convent, where the canonical hours of the divine office were chanted by a full choir of religious; and Geraldine, with sympathetic feeling, recalled the sentiments of one, at once a theologian and a poet:

“Let us contemplate in quiet meditation, the beauty and wisdom of the solemn offices which were observed in the holy precincts of the Catholic Church;—the course, divine, universal, and, like the great operations of nature, extended over every

part of the earth; for, by means of the monasteries, the celestial sounds were as familiar to the desert as to the city. They were heard in the solemn depths of the forests, on the wildest mountain-pass, and were borne along with the shriek of the sea-birds over the ocean wave.”*

Most inspiring to Geraldine’s ear, and dear to her heart, were the sounds of matins, lauds, prime, the lesser hours, vespers and complin; and most soothing to her was it to wander beneath the shade of venerable trees, and amidst the tangled copse-wood of the wilderness that surrounded the convent, where no sounds broke on her solitude, save the distant clock, or bell, or the cawing of the rooks, which had established their numerous community on the tops of the high beech trees. After some weeks thus spent, Geraldine asked her heart, whether the calm which now filled it, might not at length become stagnant, and whether the reaction of a naturally vigorous and dauntless mind, might not be to struggle and burst forth to active life again. She thought that she could safely answer “No:” and after some farther information derived from the nuns, and some more weeks of doubt respecting the will of God concerning her, “Here will I rest,” thought she: “why seek other convents, only to distract my mind?” I find in this ancient order, the especial commemoration of my

* “Mores Catholici.”

blessed Saviour's sufferings ; and for one who longs to hide herself from the glare of this world's notice and applause, can there be a fitter motto than, ' Here lies she, who, dead to all things, lives to God.' " Our heroine accordingly wrote to Mr. Bernard, that she believed herself called to an entire surrender of herself, even to relinquishing the spot where lay the mortal remains of her husband and the order he had preferred ; which she was the more willing to resign, as she thought she had all her life received too much of the applause of the world, and in the order likely to be established in the Abbey, she should still be exposed to it. She also the same day signified to the mother-prioress her desire to be admitted to the order, and, in a few days, presented her petition in chapter and was accepted. The day fixed for receiving her as postulant, was in the following week, and Geraldine considered that she had now chosen her temporal home, in foretaste of that which was eternal.

That night, having retired as usual to her room in the out-quarters, she was kneeling in prayer in her oratory, when suddenly a voice—whether to the external ear, or deeply sounding in her heart, she knew not—thus spoke : " Sick and in prison, and ye visited me not." Awe, mingled with terror and anguish, filled the heart of Geraldine, as it responded, " Lord, what wilt thou

have me to do?" The voice uttered no more, but had she not been favoured by sufficient indication of the will of God? No sleep visited her that night,—the only means by which she calmed the continued agitation and actual pain of her heart, was, by the resolution to leave her present abode on the morrow, and follow the blessed invitation of her Lord Jesus Christ.

The morning at length came, and with it more deliberation: at the earliest possible hour, Geraldine sought the confessional of Father Laurence. She related what had passed; adding, "I would willingly come also for your parting blessing, Father, for, were I to yield to my feelings, I should leave this place to-day."

After a pause, as was his wont, the gentle voice of Father Laurence put this question: "When you heard or felt those words, did they bring calm or agitation to your soul?"

"They produced the greatest possible agitation," replied Geraldine.

"Then, I think," said Father Laurence, "that we may strongly suspect them to come from the enemy, for the Spirit brings calm and peace."

"But, Father," said Geraldine, "how could the words agitate me, when they were to recall me to my real vocation, and upbraided me for deserting it? shall I remain weeping in the sepulchre, when my risen Lord bids me follow him?"

“The motives which induced you,” said Father Laurence, “to seek seclusion in preference to joining an order which receives so much the applause of men, were pure, and in the spirit of Him who desired to be despised of men. I do not pronounce on this voice as coming from the enemy, but I give you this advice, ~~do not recede from the~~ step you have actually taken here, till some proof be given you, that Almighty God has other designs for you. Rest assured, He will make evident to you His blessed will, in a manner you cannot mistake: loss of health, incapacity for the duties, rejection by the community, something like these will occur, to make plain to you the blessed will of God.”

Geraldine submitted; for, although deeply convinced that the voice was divine, yet she remembered, that the obedience of St. Theresa, to her spiritual guide, under still more trying circumstances, was highly acceptable to God; and she felt assured, that if she were submissive to the spiritual authority placed over her, He would make clear to Father Laurence, whether she were destined to serve Him by a life of contemplation and austerities, or by labours of love towards the suffering members of His mystical body.

With this firm hope, and casting aside all solicitude, our heroine began the trial of her new duties.

For awhile, all prospered, and she had conquered the first difficulties of her new life, when, as if to prove the more clearly to herself and her spiritual director, that she could do nothing but in the path designed for her, Geraldine lost, too rapidly to be mistaken, her health, her capacity, her energy, her zeal; in fact, all the powers of mind and body bestowed on her, to fulfil another vocation.

She had now the consent, nay, more, the recommendation, of Father Laurence to depart, and to think no more of any cloistered order. Her duty was to return to the world for a time, to re-establish her health, but he did not pronounce whether as a secular or a religious,—he believed her destined to serve and glorify God.

“I see that Almighty God has graciously signified to you the part of his vineyard in which you are to serve him,” said Lady Winefride, who, on our heroine’s return to her home, had once more become her guest. “You made the renunciation of this home, of the father who had resumed his claims on you, of the cherished scenes also of your earthly love, and the tomb where it sleeps for ever: and having done this, God gives back the offering, and you are bound to retain it, and to forget that you ever wished to lead a life different from that in which you have given such edification during the life of your lamented husband. All your duties are immediately around you; and,

as ‘the widow indeed’ of the early Church, you may fully consecrate yourself to God, and become the benefactress of the future convent near you, without deserting the parent whose declining years will require your duty and your love.”

Thus spoke the pious and experienced Lady Winefride, and she spoke only as she had acted ; for in early life, having lost the object of her choice, and having no call to the religious life, she had filled a post which, although not in general recommended by the Catholic clergy, was in her case not considered by her director as one of too much liberty and self-indulgence—that of a maiden lady in the world. Many had reason to bless the Divine Providence which had led and fixed in this post a being so benevolent, and endowed with strength of mind to execute the plans her heart conceived.

Geraldine listened with respect to all that Lady Winefride could urge to detain her in her home, and resolved to take no step from it, that should not be obviously pointed out to her by the Almighty hand that had brought her back to its long-tried sphere of usefulness. There were times, also, in which her now delicate and suffering frame seemed to authorise the advice now given her, to think no more of the religious vows. In these hours of sickness and despondency, her faithful Isabel again watched, like a spirit of love, around

her couch ; and laid up, unconsciously perhaps, a store of rich blessings for herself hereafter.

Mr. Bernard had welcomed our heroine back with joy unmingled with surprise, for to him, the light hovered over and revealed the scene of her future life ; nor was it dimmed either by the return of General Carrington, and the affectionate re-union of father and daughter, nor by the gradual admission of friends and acquaintances, whom, for her father's sake, she again consented to receive.

Mr. Bernard knew, that deep in Geraldine's heart was the desire perfectly to fulfil the will of God, and that, when once made known to her, there would be instant and joyful compliance. He also knew, that notwithstanding the wise arguments of her Catholic friends, and his own silence, she felt that in her present mode of life, although she might fulfil the duties of charity, and hope to hear the blessed invitation promised to those who perform them for Christ's sake, yet she would be withholding that which she had once freely offered—the conformity to His chosen life on earth. She would be rich while He was poor : caressed, while He was despised : in liberty and authority, while He became obedient even to the death of the cross.

CHAPTER XIII.

Farewell !

Ye limpid streams and floods

Farewell !

Brighter scenes I seek above,

In the realms of peace and love.

Jephtha's Daughter.

THE second year of Geraldine's widowhood was now drawing to its close. The convent, to the erection of which, all the Catholics, but especially a pious lady of rank, of the neighbourhood, had contributed, was nearly completed, when the supposed visionary scheme of an order, such as she had described to Isabel, was made known to her by Mr. Bernard, not only as the one chosen by the Bishop of the diocese for the sisters of the abbey, but also as that to which he believed her called by Almighty God, for his glory, her own sanctification, and the spiritual and temporal benefit of her suffering fellow-creatures. This was the order of our blessed Lady of Mercy, founded under this ancient religious title by an Irish lady, who had become at the same time the mother-superior of the first convent of the order.

Geraldine received this intelligence with joy and gratitude, and when she had listened to every detail which Mr. Bernard could give her, said, smiling, "I am happy to imitate that holy man who for years had been endeavouring to form a congregation of religious men who should be missionaries, teachers, and divines,—but when he heard that Saint Ignatius had founded the 'Society of Jesus,' blessed God that another had been found more worthy to accomplish that good work for the greater glory of God! And now," added she, "let there be no more delay, but, during my father's visit to his Yorkshire estates, let me at once take the step he is aware I contemplate, and let me save both him and myself a parting which is inevitable."

To this Mr. Bernard consented, provided our heroine would write soon enough to enable her father to see, or at least to write to, her before her departure.

From the real joy with which Geraldine had at length heard from her spiritual director the words, "Your hour is come," she anticipated not the conflict which was still in store for her. Yet, when the letter was written to General Carrington, the closing expression of filial love and gratitude caused her so much emotion, that having sealed and despatched it, she left the house unseen by Isabel, to wander alone through the grounds. It was the

season and the time of evening described in our opening chapter, and as our heroine stood on the high terrace, and looked over the river, valley, and distant hills, her heart swelled as though it must break. Her early childhood arose before her, as she turned to each familiar scene, when, loving and beloved, soft words and sweet caresses nurtured the cherished object of a mother's love. O ! pure unequalled love, if aught on earth can be thus termed, this—this alone can claim it : and yet there have been souls, who, feeling thus in tenderest gratitude, have yet been called to break this fondest tie, by that mysterious voice, unheard by all save her who fain would hear it not, yet cannot resist to follow it. This agony was spared to Geraldine ; her mother slept in Christ ere her young heart had known a love beyond, or she had learned to say, “ Eternal rest give unto her, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon her.” In this hour it was, her father caused the struggle she had believed was passed, and as she continued gazing on the inheritance which lay in rich yet placid beauty before her, the desertion of his only child seemed doubly cruel, and an inward conflict arose, so far more violent than any she had yet experienced, that in agony she groaned aloud, and partly roused by the sounds, fled from the terrace, and unconsciously took one of the walks which led to the avenue of entrance from the park. In this

avenue appeared, advancing from the house, the boy and pony whose office was to convey the letters to and from the post; and directly her eye caught the leather bag, she resolved to secure the letter which had thus by seeming accident been returned to her. The boy alighted, and unstrapped the bag; but Geraldine had forgotten that the key was in the charge of the steward, and its duplicate at the post-office. The pony, however, required no spur to urge his return, and our heroine remained with the bag lying at her feet. A considerable time elapsed before she again saw the young messenger, for the steward had gone forth for his evening walk. He, however, had been found, the key was produced, and our heroine, unlocking the bag, regained the letter. She looked long and earnestly at the seal, then at the address,—again placed her finger on the seal, when at length, hastily replacing the letter in the bag, which she locked, she bid the boy make what speed he could, and turned from the avenue into another part of the pleasure-grounds. “Oh God, I thank thee,” cried she, “that thou wert present with me during this temptation, when having ‘put my hand to the plough,’ I was looking back—was leaving thee sorrowfully, because I had ‘large possessions;’ was returning to ‘bury my father,’ remembering not, that every one that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father,

or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for thy name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall possess life everlasting." Geraldine resolved, as she slowly pursued her walk, to banish from her mind all solicitude respecting the inheritance she was about to renounce, casting all her care on God, who would provide; and she also resolved to hasten the time for her departure to the convent in ———, where she and two of her friends and sister penitents of Father Bernard were to make their noviciate. She had regained the terrace at a part whence the view was almost panoramic, but which was now veiled in the deepened shadows of evening. "Rest ever thus in shade," cried she, "to my weaned eyes, ye scenes of earth,—farewell! farewell!" And now, turning to the side where the Abbey hill intercepted the boundless view, she bent her steps slowly towards the house, when she perceived along the pathway which led from the Abbey, a figure advancing towards the terrace. Why did our heroine, in that hour of deepening gloom, remain to watch that form? Why did her heart throb, with mingled terror and joy? Her feet were rooted to the earth, as in a dream; her brain reeled. "What! had he indeed returned from the land of spirits, and for what purpose? was it to direct her future path?" The figure ascended the turf steps of the terrace, and Geraldine had just, by an expiring

effort of strength, made the sign of the cross, when she was addressed by the stranger, in tones which spoke to her of years gone by, but which remained but vaguely in her memory. She scarcely knew what was said to her, but her previous emotion being calmed, by the presence of a person indifferent to her, she regained all the calm dignity of her manner, and requested to know the motive for the present visit of a stranger.

"Lady De Grey," spoke this once-familiar voice, "I perceive that I am forgotten, but my memory has been more retentive, and enables me to recognize, after a lapse of years, the 'Geraldine of my early dreams.'"

The peculiar pronunciation of her name, left Geraldine no longer in doubt. "Don Carlos Duago," replied she, "I do remember you, and much regret, that my father, General Carrington, is from home, for he would have welcomed you with his wonted hospitality."

"I am aware of his absence," said Don Carlos, "in fact, I have seen him, and have his sanction for paying my respects to you."

"I regret," said Geraldine, "that I cannot supply his place in bidding you welcome to the Hall. I am on the eve of an important journey, and full of thoughts respecting it."

"You are proud, Lady De Grey," said Don Carlos, "so am I; nevertheless, having your

father's wishes on my side, I may, without intrusion, enter this once hospitable door, and for half an hour, madam, for I ask no more, speak to you on a subject which will interest you far more than you are at present disposed to believe possible."

"To-morrow," replied Geraldine, "I will take care to be at leisure at whatever hour you may appoint, but to-night I can receive no visitor."

"It is later than I intended," said Don Carlos, "but I was detained on my journey, and again wasted time in being my own guide from the town; I had not calculated on the alterations that would occur in these well-remembered grounds during thirteen years of absence. To-morrow, then—but name your hour, madam."

Geraldine did so, and Don Carlos, leaving the terrace, took the direction of the avenue which led towards Elverton, while our heroine, on re-entering the house, escaped to her room, and to her bed, but not to sleep.

The morrow came, and at the appointed hour Geraldine received Don Carlos in the library, where, according to her express wish, Isabel remained at work. In his hand he led a beautiful boy of about five years old, whom, from the striking likeness to himself, Geraldine concluded to be his son, and of whom therefore she took no notice.

"Whatever personal interest, madam," said

Don Carlos, "I may have in thus soliciting an interview, it is held in subjection to a sterner duty, and it is with reference to this duty that I now request to hear from your own lips the truth of the report, that you have renounced the intention of leaving the world to enter religion?"

"I have not renounced that intention," said Geraldine, "although ill health has compelled its delay."

"And you can willingly leave this home," said Don Carlos, "these estates, this tenantry? You can forget that you were once heiress of Elverton Manor?"

"This dwelling on the worldly prosperity which surrounds me," said our heroine, "does, I confess, surprise me, in one who was wont to glory in hereditary kindred with the Teresas, the Elizabeths, and other saints of Spain and Portugal; those saints who trampled on all the world holds glorious, to attain a heavenly crown!"

"You have remembered, then," said Don Carlos, "my youthful piety. All is not quite forgotten of those confiding days?"

"I purpose," continued Geraldine, "by the blessing of God, to leave this place to-morrow, never to re-enter it, until, in the religious garb, and as the consecrated spouse of Christ, I kneel by my father's dying bed."

"These holy and elevated feelings," said Don

Carlos, "remove many painful difficulties in my path, while they place others in my way."

"I do not understand you, Don Carlos," said Geraldine, rising. "I have replied with candour to your many unexpected inquiries, and must now hope that you are satisfied."

"Stop, madam!" said Don Carlos, as our heroine was moving to the door; "It is no sickly love-tale I have to tell, but a manly struggle with adversity, and with wrongs that heaven alone can teach me to forgive. The time has come when justice shall be done to me and mine, but I cannot forget the feeling due to her who now must be the sufferer."

"Be but as candid as I have been," said Geraldine, much surprised. "What can affect her who has given herself to God?"

"During your residence in Rome," said Don Carlos, "you visited the monastery of ——?"

"I did so," said Geraldine.

"And you there saw one who was sheltered in that holy retreat for awhile—a Spanish lady?" said he.

"I can never forget the interesting being I there met," replied Geraldine.

"Had you ever seen her before?" inquired Don Carlos.

"Never!" replied she, more and more astonished at these questions.

“ Did you never think you were watched at the palazzo ?”

“ I did think I was an object of great interest to a lady there,” replied Geraldine, “ of whom I could never obtain more than a passing glimpse. When I met the beautiful Beatrice de Mendoza at the monastery, it struck me that the face was the same, but I discarded the idea as too visionary.”

“ It was, however, true,” said Don Carlos, “ and at the time, madam, you saw Beatrice de Mendoza, she was the wife of General Carrington. Yes, the wife of your father, though not at that time mother of the boy who claims from you a sister’s love.”

A sudden light broke on Geraldine. She turned to the noble child, who stood near her, and then looked inquiringly at Don Carlos.

“ Ferdinand,” said he, “ kneel down and ask that lady’s blessing ;” but before the boy could obey, Geraldine had caught him in her arms and blessed him.

Tears glistened in the dark eyes of the Spaniard. “ You do not ask me, madam,” said he, “ what is the tie between that child and me ?”

“ His mother is, I conclude, your sister,” said Geraldine.

“ She is so,” returned Don Carlos ; “ and, as is customary in Spain, has ever borne our mother’s name, in preference to that of ‘ Duago.’ ”

“ And why—why has there been this secrecy,” cried our heroine, “ why have we not known and loved each other, and why has my father deputed another to bring my brother to my arms?”

Fire flashed from the eyes of Don Carlos. “ Why ! well may you inquire ‘ why ? ’ The high-born and virtuous Donna Beatrice Mendoza has been for nine years an unacknowledged wife, while the brother, who would ill have brooked such concealment, was suffered to languish imprisoned by his own treacherous countrymen, and when set free, soothed and silenced by the mention of his English love, and led to hope that she might yet be won—”

“ Stop ! ” cried our heroine, remembering that the young Ferdinand was intelligent enough to understand all that was said. “ I will hear no more, till it is my father’s own wish to relate to me his further history. It suffices to me at present to have found this little treasure,” and she again pressed the boy to her bosom.

“ You are to give me all this fine house and park, and a pony, and a pencil, and a great deal of money, and a knife that will cut, and a watch that will tick,” said Ferdinand, in admirable English. “ Will you give me all this ? ”

“ I will give you the pony, and the pencil, and the knife, and the watch directly,” said Geraldine, “ but the fine house and the park are not mine to

give, they belong to your father and mine. He will soon bring you here to live, and you can then ride your pony about the park."

"Shall you ride about with me?"

"No," said Geraldine, "I am going away to-morrow."

"Shall you come back again?"

"No, my little brother," said she: "I am going to be a nun; do you know what that means?"

"Yes," said he, "a nun is a woman in black, who loves God."

"And do you love him, Ferdinand?"

"Sometimes," said he.

"Why do you not love him always?"

"Because it makes me tired," said he. "I thought you were going to give me a watch, and all the other things?"

"So I am," said Geraldine, and she became during the next half hour completely occupied in supplying the various demands of this little idol, and succeeded in making him quite happy.

"But I expected to see a prettier sister," said he; "my uncle said I should find a beautiful sister—and now you do look prettier, that your cheeks are red, and that you laugh."

"Ferdinand," said she, "when you say your prayers, will you say, 'O God, bless my sister Geraldine?'"

"I will," said he.

“ And when I am a nun, will you be a good and dutiful boy to your father, and love him, and pray for him, and try to make him as happy as I am making you now ? ”

“ I will,” said Ferdinand.

“ And will you be kind to the poor people who live near this park, and give them money, and food, and clothes, and all that they want ? ”

“ I cannot give them my knife,” said he, “ nor anything that I want myself, but they can have what I do not want.”

“ If you give to the poor only what you do not want, God will not love you,” said Geraldine : but Ferdinand spread his dimpled hands on all his treasures. Our heroine continued, however, to plead so movingly in behalf of the suffering poor, and enforced so effectually the principle on which this charity was to be exercised, that, to her infinite joy and thanksgiving, the treasures were relinquished one by one, till at length, with a burst of grief, the pony was also resigned, and he exclaimed, “ You know I can walk to God ! ”

The post-chaise that was to bear the little Ferdinand back to his present home now drove to the door, before either of the party were aware of the hour. Amongst the treasures which the little Ferdinand had selected, was a book which had belonged to De Grey, but which, not having been packed up with those presented either to the

priest's house or convent, was lying on the table. Its white vellum binding caught his eye, and with pertinacious adherence to his own choice, he liked no other book recommended to him, half so well. Geraldine, breathing a fervent prayer that the noble and chivalrous qualities of the author and of the late possessor, might adorn the breast of her brother, gladly bestowed on him the "Broad Stone of Honour," and having kept nothing from the child for the poor, but a purse of coins she had previously given him, held him locked in her arms for some time, before she felt able to resign in her turn this newly found treasure, and suffer him to be lifted to the chaise, in which sat Iago, the General's confidential servant.

Don Carlos returned to the room where Geraldine was standing by the window, and closing the door, urged, in respectful but energetic terms, his hope, that she might consent to remain in the domestic circle about to surround her. He spoke of the strength and tenderness of her father's regard for her, of the exalted sentiments entertained by his sister of the being she had so long and ardently desired to know, of the new tie of a brother whom she loved without a feeling of jealousy, and lastly of himself, his career of sorrow and adversity, and the hope he entertained, that he might, in time, revive in her heart the interest which he proudly felt he had been the first to inspire.

To the first part of Don Carlos' arguments, Geraldine replied by earnest assurances of the joy and thankfulness she felt towards Heaven, that the decline of her father's days would be cheered by domestic affection, and begged that he would convey these sentiments to his sister, "with this pledge of their sincerity," added she, placing a sealed packet in his hand, for Donna Beatrice, which was a miniature of herself. "For me," added she, "these earthly ties and affections are passed, never to be recalled: the remembrance even of them is lost in the glorious future, and were I to prolong this interview, Don Carlos, it would only give you pain." Some time, however, passed before Don Carlos could be convinced that she had irrevocably chosen to live for God alone, for he had gained courage from her omitting to plead, against him, the memory of De Grey; but this omission had been caused solely by the higher impediment of her heavenly espousals; which superseded all other considerations; but for that all engrossing feeling, she might in truth have said—

"Gin living worth could win my heart,
You should na plead in vain,
But in the darksome grave 'tis laid,
Never to rise again."

At length Don Carlos joined his impatient charge; and Geraldine resting her head on the seat of the window near her, remained immoveable

and in silence, during hours of thought connected with the extraordinary disclosures just made to her.

The journey took place on the following day to the Convent of N—, where the meeting is described, in the first chapter of this volume, between our heroine and Angela De Grey, called in religion Sister Mary Joseph. The events we have recorded, and much of the mental history, having been related, and some hours of pure enjoyment spent in each other's society, the appointed hour at length arrived for Geraldine to rejoin her companions, and to pursue her journey.

"Farewell, dear Angela," said she, "farewell in this world. We are not as those who sorrow without hope; for if I be faithful to the grace vouchsafed me, we shall meet as sister spouses of the heavenly King, to follow Him whithersoever He goeth."

"May Almighty God for ever bless you, my dear and exalted friend," said Angela. "I did not expect to feel either this meeting, or this parting, so much as I have done; I will not regret however this discovery of my weakness, but rejoice in the humiliation."

"Shall we indeed not see you ever again, Lady De Grey?" said one of the nuns, who accompanied our heroine to the carriage. "You are not to keep enclosure, therefore perhaps you will some day visit us again?"

“The Sisters of Mercy,” said Geraldine, “quit their loved enclosure, at the call of mercy and charity alone. They make no journeys of recreation. Once returned to the scene of my duties at Elverton, I leave it not; so let us part willingly in the body, to meet constantly in spirit at the throne of grace. Let me entreat you to remember me, in frequent prayer !”

One more embrace from Angela, and the friends mutually surrendered the creature for the service of the Creator.

On arriving at her father's house in Berkeley-square, Geraldine found a note from Mr. Bernard, followed soon after by a visit from himself, stating that the two ladies who were to accompany her to ———, had begged for some days' delay, before they should join her in London, and that he had promised for her, that she would consent to wait for them, and pass the leisure evenings, which this delay would give her, with his friend and benefactress, the Baroness de M——.

Geraldine had much to communicate to her reverend friend, respecting the disclosure of Don Carlos; but she suspected, as she told her tale, that Mr. Bernard had partly, if not fully, known the ties which General Carrington had formed; and he now congratulated her on the comfort it must afford her, to feel released from all responsibility respecting his future happiness. “See,” con-

tinued Mr. Bernard, "the tender care of Almighty God over you, and his indulgence for your weakness. He has permitted you, by the assistance of his grace, to make him the free offering of all that you believed you held in prospect, as well as in possession, and allows you to feel all the joy, which that generous surrender brings the heart. In the sight of men, perhaps, you will retire from the world because you have ceased to be a great heiress, but in the sight of God, you leave it in the purity of a devoted heart."

Geraldine would willingly have excused herself from the introduction she had once so much wished, to the celebrated lady with whom Mr. Bernard was now a guest, but at length consented to pass part of the following day with her; a consent which produced from the Baroness that evening a note, or rather letter of thanks, written with all the warmth and spirit which characterized her, and at two o'clock on the following day, Mr. Bernard called by appointment, and accompanied our heroine to the dwelling of that lady.

CHAPTER XIV.

The good begun by thee, shall onward flow,
In many a branching stream, and wider grow ;
The seed, that, in these few and fleeting hours,
Thy hands unsparing and unwearied sow,
Shall deck thy grave with aramanthine flowers,
And yield thee fruits divine in heaven's immortal bowers.

Wilcox.

THE house of the Baroness de M— was shabby, close, and dark ; and dullness seemed to pervade all that was visible. A gentleman, whom Mr. Bernard greeted as a brother priest, was sole occupant of the drawing-rooms, excepting a little dog, who resented their entrance by every possible demonstration, and a large handsome cat, who with quiet dignity withdrew. Geraldine sat on the soiled and ragged sofa, in spite of the dog, which the Rev. Mr. Corbey endeavoured to pacify, while Mr. Bernard hearing his name vociferated in shrill tones from an upper room, obeyed the summons, and after some minutes the sounds approached sufficiently near to distinguish their import.

“ Where is she,—the charming creature,—where

is the celebrated Lady De Grey? I must see her directly, sir! Do you hear, sir! Directly I say!" and the door flying open, from a vigorous push from without, a tall and erect old lady stood in the entrance, for a few instants in silence, taking a scrutinizing survey of our heroine's face and form, who on her part was moved to something of curiosity and interest, as she at length beheld the far-famed Baroness de M—. She was dressed in a long and tightly fitting black satin dress, over which hung a little cloak of the same hue and material, surmounted by a full deep ruff, of white lace; her cap corresponded with the ruff, and over it was thrown a narrow black scarf. An artificial cluster of fair ringlets nearly concealed her small and half closed eyes, while her gracious and pleasing mouth smiled in evident content.

"So you are Lady De Grey! I am delighted with you! I have heard all your history,—people are crazy about you; raving mad; but that would not make me like you. I expected to see a fine, loud, talkative, pedantic woman, and you seem as soft as a dove. I shall doat on you!"

"I scarcely feel I am welcomed by a stranger," said Geraldine advancing, "for with the countless multitude, I have learned to know the beneficent Baroness de M—."

"Ma'am, I have done a great deal of good. I have deprived myself of comforts to relieve the

distressed. I have given to the just and the unjust, but I shall not get to heaven the more for all this, because I am so pleased with myself ; my left hand is sure to know everything that my right hand does. But why think of myself when you are before me, and my old friend Mr. Bernard is come to me at last, and here is good Mr. Corbey,—charming ! delightful ! Mr. Corbey, you must stay and dine with me. We shall then be a ‘*partie quarrée*,’ which is perfection.”

“I cannot accept your hospitality to-day, Baroness, but perhaps you will allow me to call at some future period.”

“Sir, I never like priests to call merely, they are to make use of my house as they would of an inn. They must dine, sir, and you must dine here to-morrow. I like your face, sir. It is not handsome, but it is wise and benevolent, and I hear enough of you, sir, from our good bishop, to make me highly esteem you. And now, my dear Lady De Grey, tell me how long you can stay? I like to know my fate at once.”

“I can remain until the evening,” replied Geraldine.

“Ah, my dear, I expected you would stay with me until you left town, but you do not take to me as I do to you, or you would not be so base as to rob me of what is mine by promise, your delightful society. And so, my dear ma’am, your father is a

Catholic, but a poor one, however, I fear. He is governed by human respect. I knew him before you were born. He admired me vastly. A fine martial figure, looking as if he would bear down all before him; and yet he is afraid, I understand, of supporting the truths he believes."

"I wish you good day, Baroness," said Mr. Corbey, wishing to interrupt this thinking aloud, which he feared would wound Lady De Grey.

"Good bye, sir," said the Baroness, "but look in upon us this evening, if you can; 'au revoir à ce soir.' There, sir! I give you the refrain of a beautiful little French song. Do you sing, my dear ma'am? but why do I ask? I see, by your whole air, that you possess every accomplishment and every grace, without being handsome. Now, that was just my own case. I was never beautiful, ma'am, but I had all the effect of a beauty, because I had grace and spirit. Come, sir," to Mr. Bernard, who had retired to a corner, with his breviary, "mind your office, and don't be listening to my charms, for,

'Green leaves all turn yellow, yellow, yellow.'

"Pray, Lady De Grey, do you know why I wear this little cloak? I will tell you, as I told the bishop, when he asked me the reason: 'my lord,' said I, 'because I have this day as fine a figure as I ever had in my life, so I hide it in pity to strangers; for, what would be their consterna-

tion, if, after following this perfect figure, I were to turn round upon them with my death's-head? Ma'am, they say I am a hundred, but that's a lie, I am only ninety. Come, sir, have you not finished your task, yet? Our priests, ma'am, for fear they should not have enough to do, are obliged to spoil their eyes by reading the little print of their breviary so many hours a day. I threaten to throw the books behind the fire, for whenever I invite a good priest to spend the day with me, the first thing he tells me is, that he has not had time to say his office, and during all my pretty prattle, there he sits, trying not to listen. Ah! sir, so you are smiling at last. Come, get it over at once, and then we will have dinner. Pray, Lady De Grey, did you ever hear of my dinners? perhaps not,—well, you shall have a specimen to-day. My dinners, ma'am, just reverse the sentence passed on the city dinners; for with me, there are more good things said than eaten. Ah! my dear, you can understand a jest, you suit me exactly. What a pity we cannot live together, and converse on things grave or gay, as suited the mood of the hour. How much better to stay with me, who love you, than to follow this will-o'-the-wisp, called a vocation. We should be just as independent during the mornings as if we were strangers, and meet in the evenings to cheer each other, as two widows should, until you should

marry again ; for I am not selfish, and would not keep you a widow for my sake. I have had persons to live with me, ma'am, but no one like you, and I love you with all my heart. You remind me of a dear friend I had when I was a girl. You will say I have a fine memory to remember so long ago. Yes, ma'am, I have a very fine memory. This lady and I were in a convent together in Paris for our education. She lost everything afterwards in the French Revolution. Ah, ma'am ! that revolution ! well ! if it did many shocking things, it did a good thing for me, for it led the way to my marriage with my dear baron. Ah, ma'am ! people may talk as they please of their first-love, but all that I had ever felt or fancied, was realized in this second marriage. The baron was in every relation of life, a perfect Christian, as well as an accomplished nobleman. My affection was mingled with respect and even veneration, and 'tis since his death I have been a widow indeed ! Bless me, sir," to Mr. Bernard, "so you know exactly when to finish your office, for it is just striking three o'clock. I rather suspect, sir, you say part of it twice over, on purpose not to talk to me. Now, pull the bell, but don't break the wire. Bless me ! I shall not pay for all the damage you do here, sir. Charles ! Charles, come in Charles, we want our dinner, Charles ; for we have all been talking till we are dead. Ma'am, I am very kind to my

four servants. I give them plenty of every thing, and spare nothing to make them happy. I keep no accounts; and I spend about fifty pounds a year more than if I were one of your locking-up ladies. Ma'am, I never could lock up either my thoughts or my money. My servants are all Protestants, and I leave them to talk with the good priests or not, just as they like. I never say a word to them myself. I hate your cupboard conversions. Charles, don't put the table so near me. Draw it away, sir, I am going to the piano, to sing to Lady De Grey." The old lady flourished across the room, and sitting down to the instrument, struck a few emphatic chords, and began in a clear and true, though cracked voice, "I won't be a nun, I can't be a nun, &c." Mr. Bernard drew his chair near Geraldine, and said in a low voice, "All this is too much for your present spirits, I fear."

The tears which had gathered in her eyes now overflowed, but she hastily dried them, and said, smiling, "I assure you that I am amused, and were it not so, I could endure anything, when it is to be for the last time."

"I expect we shall see our Elverton friends to-morrow," said he; and at this moment, the dinner being brought in, the baroness started up, and clapping her hands, cried, "Come, sir, say grace. Charles, take away the dog and cat, and don't come up again till I ring. Now, this is charming!

‘The feast of reason and the flow of soul,’ with something for the animal man at the same time.”

The dinner was scarcely over, when Charles announced that a person below wished very particularly to see the Baroness de M—.

“A person!” cried she; “pray be more exact in your terms. Is it a man or a woman?”

“A man, my lady.”

“Pray, Lady De Grey, do you ever read the newspaper?”

“Never,” replied Geraldine.

“Well, ma’am, I read the other day of a trial in which it was necessary to ascertain the precise meaning of the term ‘respectable,’ and it was established in court that respectable means ‘to keep a gig’! Pray, Charles, did the man below come in a gig?”

“No, my lady; but I think he looks as if he might.”

“Ha! ha! charming. Let him come up; but first draw away our dinner-table;—and stop, Charles; this ‘very particularly’ wishing to see me, I do not like; for this almost invariably means very particularly wishing for my money. Show him up, however, and stay in the room till I give you a sign that all is safe. Sir,” to the mild, and apparently distressed, young stranger, who entered, “if you are come for my money, it is too late; for I have given it all away, and am as poor

as yourself, and very nearly as shabby. Pray, sir, who are you?"

The stranger advanced, and held out a printed paper; but the baroness shrieked, "Don't show me papers and petitions. Bless me, sir, I never admit such people; I even forbid my servants to take in these papers at my door. Come, sir, cannot you speak? Who are you?"

"I am a monk of the order of La Trappe," replied he.

"A monk! a monk! No, sir; I have nothing to do with monks or—monkeys!"

The young man smiled. "Oh, sir, you like a joke, do you? Come, I like you for that; but I have nothing left for lazy, begging monks. I have enough to do to take care of our poor parish priests, who are killing themselves with work. Here is my friend Mr. Bernard paying me a visit, because his bishop peremptorily ordered him to be idle for a month, and for that purpose to leave his own mission; but what rendered this necessary? Sir, I will tell you. He had been slaving night and day, without any relaxation, amongst his poor people, who have increased to thousands, and who can neither live nor die without him. Up all night frequently, to attend some poor creature, miles away in some wretched hovel, through wet and cold, to give him the last rites of our holy church. Sir, I can compare our priests to nothing

more closely than to an overloaded horse, sinking under his efforts; but these, sir, are the men for my money—not your lazy monks!”

“Ah, Baroness,” said Mr. Bernard, “you only require to know more on the subject, and you will own that there is no such thing as a lazy monk. The useful and laborious order of La Trappe”—

“Useful?” cried the Baroness; “useful, sir, and laborious! Bless, me, sir! a Trappist monk useful?”

“Yes, Baroness, I repeat it; the useful and laborious order of La Trappe requires only to be better known, and you will be the first to render the tribute of a generous mind to those you have misjudged. The monks of Melleraye, before they were driven from their peaceful retirement, were the indefatigable workmen of a large factory, under the control of Mr. Saulmier; and since their establishment in Ireland, they have not been idle, as your present visitor will doubtless prove to you, if you will invite his history.”

“Come, then, sir,” said the baroness to the young monk, “begin your history, and relate to me everything from the time of your leaving Melleraye; but first tell me your name?”

“My name in the world?”

“Bless me, sir! your name in the world was common enough, depend upon it. It is your name in your monastery I wish to know.”

“ In religion I am Brother Julian.”

“ Well, Brother Julian, begin directly.”

The young Trappist obeyed, by drawing a letter from his pocket, which his abbot of Mount Melleraye in Ireland had written to a reverend friend in London, who had permitted him to make use of it for the information of the benevolent.

“ My dear friend,—

“ In reply to your communication of the 8th instant, I beg to offer for your information the following abstract of our labours, since the commencement of our establishment on this mountain. Having been deprived of our monastery and property in France, we arrived in Ireland in a state of the most appalling indigence. Our number was then, as it is at present, about eighty in community. We had no friends, no means of any sort. After many laborious journeys, in order to find a place on which I might form a foundation, and establish my brethren, I found none better suited than this tract of barren mountain; and you will be able to form a correct idea of our labours, when I say, that here lay a tract of country, containing more than 5000 statute acres, uncultivated, neglected, despised. Here was neither hedge, fence, tree, nor even shrub of any sort; nothing appeared but towering mountains, which seemed to look down in savage wildness on the gloomy plains, extending far away, and concealing their stone-set surfaces

under the wild heath, or dusky turf. Of this tract Sir R—— H—— kindly allowed me to select a part, which having done, I stood alone in the centre; and looking around in awful gaze, could discover nothing but desolation. Here was nothing to encourage,—no hedges, no trees, not even a house, wherein, with my distressed brethren, I might find refuge against the fury of the elements, which here exercised, in every terrific form, the most destructive sway. A little cottage, that had been occupied by the keeper of this part of the C—— estate, and which stood at the extremity of our newly acquired, but wretchedly destitute, inheritance, was exclusively our place of retreat. That cottage is rather too confined to accommodate four persons, and yet more than twenty of my brethren, with myself, contrived to live in it during an entire year, subsisting on a few potatoes, which were given us by our charitable neighbours, and having water only for beverage, or, at best, a little milk. In that condition, unprovided with instruments of agriculture, or money to purchase them, having scarcely ordinary clothing, how were we to flatter ourselves with the hope of ever being able to succeed in raising a monastery, or cultivating land that required not only instruments, horses, strenuous and persevering efforts, but likewise abundant funds? We, however, contrived to procure a few deal boards, with which we

constructed a sort of oratory, and temporary altar, where we attended to our religious exercises. We arose at a little after midnight, chanted the divine office, having much difficulty to defend our books and persons from the torrents of rain by which we were inundated, and which found free access through the numerous openings of our frail chapel. Here we committed ourselves to the care of Divine Providence, and soon discovered the truth of the prophetic oracles, "No one ever hoped in the Lord, and was confounded." The friends of humanity,—and with feelings of tender gratitude I willingly record it,—the people of England, extended the hand of succour to raise our oppressed condition. Their benevolence and liberality enabled us to procure instruments, and with the aid first of one, and then of two horses, we commenced operations on the soil, that had never before been touched by the hand of industry. I do not attempt to describe what a scene of labours, pains, distress, now opened before us. We found the land covered in general with turf, varying in depth from three inches to three feet, and nourishing vast quantities of strong heath. A little below the surface, appeared immense numbers of stones, great and small, but all firmly imbedded in the earth. To dislodge those long occupiers of the soil was indispensable to our proceeding with the work of reclaiming any part of it. The stones thus removed

we collected; and having obtained means to purchase lime, and hire masons, we constructed a house, built a lime-kiln, and continued with more courage our labours of breaking up, draining, and cultivating, until by perseverance we had sowed a few acres of potatoes. Then we proceeded to make and burn bricks, which served to advance our building. We laid out a kitchen-garden, we likewise planted upwards of 150,000 timber trees; and when the first house was completed, we laid the foundation of the abbey. All the stones necessary for its construction we extracted from the land as we proceeded in preparing it for cultivation. Being at great loss for manure, and having nothing but lime, which is the first thing requisite, I procured sand from Y——, which I had conveyed to C—— in large boats, and thence carted upon our newly cultivated parts. In this manner we proceeded during three years. The example thus given has been productive of the most beneficial results; many persons being moved by it, came and took into their hands other portions of the barren country; those were followed by others more numerous; houses arose on every side; industry was seen actively exerting its beneficent and cheering influence over the entire range; until at length, even now, its happy results have extended to nearly the summits of our adjacent mountains. The desert has cast off its gloomy weeds, and smiles in the full attire of floral beauty.

“This, my dear friend, is a mere abstract of what has been accomplished here during the last six years, by the aid of voluntary contributions, on the part of a distressed people, and by the steady perseverance of a few poor religious men. In a moral point of view, the enterprise is equally consoling, the people are taught their Christian duties, children instructed, and universal peace everywhere diffused.”

The young Trappist cast a look of gratitude and intelligence to Mr. Bernard, as he finished his abridged history, to which Geraldine had listened with lively interest; and the Baroness exclaimed, “Upon my word, Mr. La Trappe, you and your abbot are at once poets and orators; and when you do speak, it certainly is to the purpose. So your community contrive to do a great deal of silent good? That would not suit me,—I do nothing in silence, and I fear you would not admit me to your order.”

“Our female Trappists,” said the monk smiling, “are allowed some mitigation of the rule, but we understand that this is not acceptable to them. Indeed when it is considered that we chant the whole of the divine office in choir, and that the rest of our time is employed in severe manual labour, we have little breath left for the mere amusement of talking.”

“Sir, I like what voice you have, better than I

did when you first came in. It then sounded very whining and hypocritical. Pray, sir, are you hungry?"

"I am, madam!"

"Well, sir, I like that answer. You shall not be hungry long; here, Charles, bring tea, and a mutton chop for Monsieur La Trappe."

"No, madam, I thank you, I cannot eat flesh meat."

"You cannot sir, on a Thursday, not a vigil! don't be so scrupulous."

"I cannot, madam. A Trappist keeps perpetual abstinence."

"Bless me, sir, you are mighty decided. Charles bring plenty of bread and butter an inch thick, for Monsieur La Trappe."

While the tea was in progress, Charles gave notice that a certain tradesman had brought a bale of goods for the inspection of the Baroness.

"Send him up directly," cried she, "he is the very person I want. Come in, sir, and spread all your goods upon the carpet. Are they the worst things you have in the shop?"

"Pretty nearly, my lady."

"Sir, 'pretty nearly' will not do for me. I sent to you to bring me all the rubbish you had. What is that, sir?"

"It is a damaged piece of merino, my lady, once intended for drawing-room curtains, but now, with a little management"—

“Charming ! sir, I perceive you are a man of sense. Mr. Bernard ! why positively, sir, you are getting into the ‘prayer of quiet !’ Bring down your thoughts, sir, to sublunary things, and tell me whether this stuff will not cut up delightfully into vestments ?”

“Why, Baroness, considering the purpose for which you intend it, the holes and spots appear numerous.”

“Not at all, sir ! They can all be hidden under the trimming ; but you are become vastly fine, and must have everything of the most expensive sort. Bless me, sir, I’ve no money left for your grand brocades and tissues. Charles, send Mrs. Kay here. Kay ! come in, Kay. Kay, did you ever see a Trappist monk ? Now is your time, for there sits one. But I did not send for you to look at him, but at this beautiful piece of red stuff. Now cannot you manage the damaged part under the lace, or rather the braiding, for I cannot afford lace ? Come, Mrs. Kay, you are mighty silent. Are you thinking of La Trappe ?”

“No, my lady, I am thinking of this red merino.’

“Then, ma’am, give us a manifestation of your thoughts.”

“Why, my lady, you tell me to manage the damaged parts, and it is all damaged !”

“And so were the martyrs all damaged, and full of holes and spots, before they gained their

crown, and this red colour is for their feasts. Ha, ha,—charming ! a capital idea, and worthy of De M—. I will buy the whole piece, sir ; so remember the discount for prompt payment.”

“ Now, brother Julian,” turning to the monk, as the tradesman left the room, “ having dispatched this business, I am ready, and more than ready to hear much about you. I should like vastly to know what you do with yourself every day and all day long, in your convent, when your begging trips are over ?”

“ Our’s is not a mendicant order,” replied brother Julian, “ and I trust that by the blessing of God on our labours, our monastery will not in future require the alms of the faithful. Would you wish to have, madam, an exact account of our monastic observances ?”

“ I should, sir.”

“ We rise at midnight,” said he, “ and continue in meditation till one o’clock, when we begin the matin service, which, as we sing all the nocturns with lauds, continues till break of day. At five o’clock prime is sung. At six the bell rings us out to work in the fields, or at home, as it may have been arranged in chapter the preceding evening. Tierce is at ten o’clock, immediately before high mass, which is sung every day.”

“ Bless me, sir,” interrupted the Baroness, “ you shall have a set of vestments for the feasts

of the martyrs, off my beautiful piece of red stuff. I am sure your abbot will be charmed."

The gravity of the young monk was nearly overcome, but he passed his hand across his face and resumed—"Sext follows immediately after high mass. We then meditate till the angelus at twelve, after which the bell rings for dinner."

"Pray, sir, is that your first meal?"

"It is, madam, and in Lent is deferred till four o'clock."

"Fasting, with singing and hard labour!" cried she. "It is enough to kill you, sir. No wonder that you keep silence when you can. All this is very foolish. Go on, sir."

"During the summer months we are allowed an hour's rest after dinner."

"Why that is very luxurious, sir—a siesta for a monk!"

"We have but four hours' sleep at night," said brother Julian, "and this one hour just supports nature; our beds are of boards, raised from the floor. At the end of the hour we go out again to work. At three we sing none, then labour again till near vespers, which are at six, and after this we have our supper. The chapter is held after supper. Complin is at half-past seven, and at eight o'clock we go to rest. From this last service till after prime the next morning, is our time of strict silence. We take no notice of each other,

not even of father abbot, if we meet him, and we must make no sign, which we are allowed to do when at work."

"Sir, I remember to have heard that you talk with your fingers, which is breaking the spirit of your rule. Come, sir, defend yourself."

"The signs we are permitted to make when at work," replied the monk, "are limited to what is necessary to carry on our labour. Any indulgence beyond this, would be, indeed, contrary to the spirit of our holy rule, which prescribes that our life should be passed in continual and uninterrupted union with God by prayer and praise."

"Upon my word, sir, I really like you very well, and your account has been very interesting. Tell me what you are allowed to eat by your rule?"

"All abstinence food we may take excepting fish," said brother Julian. "Our dinner in Ireland generally consists of a good-sized bowl of meagre soup, as many potatoes as we wish, with milk, and our own coarse bread; we drink only water; and that we may not take this fare with too much avidity, our abbot rings a little bell three times during dinner, when not a hand must move, or even a morsel be swallowed, till the sign be given to proceed. Our supper is generally bread, with cheese or sallad."

"Sir!" cried the baroness, "the vestments will

be made up by next week, and when you call for them you shall dine with me : I will give you your choice of every thing you have mentioned, and I will take care to have a little bell to ring at you whenever you get red in the face."

Brother Julian arose, and the cheerful humility with which he had received all her jokes, warmed the heart of the old lady, who called after him, " Stop, sir, I really like you very much, and shall esteem your order henceforward. When you come next week, I shall have received a yearly present of two cheeses, and you shall have half of one of them to take back with you to your monastery, together with the vestments. Now you may go—*pax tecum !*"

" If I can spare any money next year, and am alive to give it," said the Baroness, after the monk had departed, " I will enquire how these silent agriculturists are going on, but now I have not a shilling that is not bespoken. This is true poverty, my dear Lady De Grey, and the poverty of a willing heart ; but as for the vow you are going to take, it is all wrong, depend upon it. Did not Almighty God give you your fortune, and have you not been employing it hitherto in his service most usefully and happily, and now you are about to give it all into the hands of others, and so resign your trust. Mighty foolish, ma'am. I have no patience with those who are advising you so badly. Do you hear that, Mr. Bernard ?"

“ I do, Baroness,” replied he.

“ Come, then, sir, stand on the defence.”

“ Why, Baroness,” said he, “ you do not require to be told, that while Almighty God requires of all to obey his commands, he invites some to advance still farther, and follow his counsels. Amongst these counsels, that of voluntary poverty is recommended by these words—‘ If you would be perfect, go and sell all that you have ;’ and to this is added a rich promise—‘ Blessed are the poor in spirit, for their’s is the kingdom of heaven.’ ”

“ I have always supposed,” said Geraldine, “ that poverty of spirit meant humility.”

“ You may safely think so still,” replied he, “ for in this sense it is understood by many saints and divines ; while others, and amongst them Saint Basil, appropriate it to those who voluntarily became poor for His sake, who gave us the living example of this virtue throughout his whole life : born in a stable, he had not afterwards whereon to lay his head, till in death he was wrapped in grave clothes, and laid in a sepulchre by the bounty of a stranger. Poverty is, indeed, the very foundation of religious perfection, for our Saviour declares—‘ If any of you do not renounce all he possesses, he cannot be my disciple ;’ and this vow of poverty therefore takes precedence of the other vows. Now, though I am

willing to grant that this renouncement cannot always be literal, and must be taken in the sense of a willingness of heart to renounce all, still the literal fulfilment of the precept is the surest step to attain the other, for it is proved to be far easier to cease to love those things from which we have parted, than to keep the heart disengaged from them while present."

"Well, sir," cried the Baroness, "I have nothing left but the bare necessities of life, and I rejoice at it. Pray is not my way just as good as giving up all my fortune at once by vow?"

"It is the way in which Almighty God designs you to serve him," replied Mr. Bernard, "and therefore it is for you the best way; but had he called you to the entire renouncement of yourself by vow, it would have been a still greater favour, for the oblation of ourselves to God by vow, is of so great value in his sight, that the fathers term it a second baptism."

"Bless me, sir, you make me very uncomfortable," cried the Baroness. "After all I have done to please God, that you give the preference to nuns; I shall dislike them now through jealousy. Pray, sir, do you mean that all my good works are unacceptable to God, because I have not offered myself by vow?"

"I repeat, Baroness, that I do not believe God ever called upon you for more than you have

done, therefore rest assured that he is pleased by your offering to him his own gifts, in the way he has appointed."

"Then, sir, I will give up my jealousy of the nuns, and go on in the old way. Indeed, I am too old to be changing my mode of life. But do you not know many persons like me in the world, whose hearts are so detached from their riches, that they are far more acceptable to Almighty God than many a nun, who having relinquished a great deal in her time of fervour, becomes gradually attached to the few things allowed her? because, sir, I have been told that this is the case."

"Assuredly I do. I consider the case of a tepid and relaxed religious to be deplorable indeed, both in this world and the next. Woe to her, who heaps up superfluous things under pretence of devotion, on any motive whatever,—who is fond of receiving presents,—who forgets, that by virtue of her vow, she can possess nothing, having only permission to use that which belongs to the sisterhood in general. A nun, in fact, is not really poor in the gospel sense, and, therefore, is faithless to her vow, if, when she is deprived of all things, she does not rejoice in this conformity to the poverty of Jesus Christ. The Church is express in enforcing the rigour of poverty in those who have voluntarily embraced it, by forbidding, in the Council of Lateran, any religious the possession of

anything, or the personal use of any money. Any religious retaining any money, unless given him by his superior for some commission, must be separated from the participation of the holy mysteries; and should money or goods be found after his death, which he had secreted, he shall be deprived of the prayers of the community, and of Christian burial. This was confirmed by succeeding popes, and by the Council of Trent."

"Sir, this is very severe!"

"Not, if you look closely into the subject, for you will find a parallel case in that of Ananias and his wife, related in the Acts of the Apostles. No human authority had obliged Ananias to sell his land; it was a voluntary act, but having once dedicated the profits to God, it was a violation of that contract to retain any part of it for his own use; and the lie he told was not unto man, but unto the Holy Ghost, and received its awful punishment. In the few instances which occurred in the early ages, of a religious secreting money, it was thrown into his grave with these words,—'Let thy money go with thee to perdition.'"

"Bless me, sir, let us talk of something pleasanter."

"We will speak then," continued Mr. Bernard, "of the nun who is truly rich. It is she who desires nothing, for then she may be said to possess all things, who having renounced all earthly pos-

sessions, and denied herself every remembrance of them, has attained to the third degree of holy poverty, which is, to keep the heart disengaged from the best and holiest things, that nothing created may cause infidelity to the Creator."

"These three degrees of advance to perfection," said Geraldine, "are contained equally, I conclude, in the other religious vows. We first devote our person and personal possessions; next our memory and will; lastly, our heart and the higher faculties of the mind."

"My dear," said the Baroness, "you cannot say that the heart is the last thing given in your case, for was it not the heart which first made the offering?"

"Yes, Baroness! the heart made the first offering—but of what? Of everything but itself. It was very liberal in that which distressed it not. It said, 'Take, O Lord, my fortune, for I love it not; take from me the luxuries of life, for I despise them; take away all acquaintances, and social amusements, for I am wearied of them. Take, at the same time, all fond remembrance of these former pursuits and pleasures, and to ensure this, take all my intellectual associates into thy holy service—memory, will, understanding; for I am queen, and I command them to be thine.' God then says, 'Give me thyself wholly; and as thou sayest, all these thy subjects must be mine.' The heart

then tries to spring to God, and finding a number of hidden guests which weigh it down, mourns to perceive, that although the first to make the offering, it is the last to become a perfect holocaust.

"It seems to me," continued Geraldine, "that if either of the three religious vows were fulfilled in perfection, the other two must necessarily be so likewise; for the heart that is truly 'poor,' possesses God alone; the heart that is truly 'chaste,' admits God alone; and the heart that is truly 'obedient,' listens to God alone."

"My dear," said the Baroness, "you will have to obey some virago; so don't talk of obeying God alone."

"Lady De Grey means," said Mr. Bernard, "that whatever may be the commands of her mother-superior, she will listen as to the voice of God."

"Without hearing the whispers," added Geraldine, "of the will and understanding."

"Ah, the understanding!" said Mr. Bernard, "there is the difficulty—for it is seldom disposed to submit; and I rather suspect, Lady De Grey, that in your interior dominions, if the heart be queen, the understanding is king."

"And the will prime-minister?" added she, smiling.

"I did not say that," returned he, also smiling.

“But what post in your dominions do you give to the other faculty of the mind, memory?”

“Oh, memory is the old queen-dowager, who would fain prattle of bye-gone days, were she permitted, but she has lately been amused into silence by a little winnowing machine, with which she separates from the queen’s jewels the tinselled dust and chaff which has accumulated.”

“As for my world within,” cried the Baroness, “the king never had more than the crown matrimonial, and even then he was henpecked. But to leave all this pretty poetical view of things, my dear ma’am, and to come to my confessions, in plain prose, I never was, am not, and never will be, obedient, therefore I can’t be a nun you see. Liberty is to me as the air I breathe!”

“But if that be your only objection, Baroness,” said Mr. Bernard smiling, “I will impart to you a wonderful secret, by which a nun can follow her own will all her life long, and yet attain perfection.”

“Come sir, tell me this moment.”

“She takes her superior’s will, makes it her own, and thus accomplishes, without pain or difficulty, all that obedience requires.”

“None of your Jesuitical conundrums for me, sir. Two persons can never have the same will.”

“Yes they can, Baroness, by the help of God; but this wonderful secret is discovered only by

those to whom he has given the grace of a vocation to the religious life."

At this moment the Baroness's maid entered the room with a long flaring tallow-candle, to light her lady to bed.

"What! Mrs. Kay, am I to go to bed before my company have left me?"

"As you please, my lady."

"Well, I don't please to leave Lady De Grey."

But the old lady was at length persuaded to go to bed, on the promise that Geraldine would visit her when there, and join in the litany, which her maid repeated, and she responded to, every night, "for a happy death." Nothing could exceed the devotion with which the Baroness repeated the words "Merciful Jesus have mercy on me;" and moved to a warmer feeling of regard and respect than she had yet entertained, our heroine, at the close of the litany, besought her blessing, and retired, just as her carriage was announced below.

CHAPTER XV.

Ah! torture not the fluttering heart
By lingering farewell.

“I CAN wait no longer,” said Geraldine on the following morning, as a light double rap was heard at the hall door; “I begin to feel either a presentiment or nervous apprehension of being altogether detained; and if my future sisters arrive not by their own appointment, I shall linger here no more.” As the footsteps approached, her heart beat, and a sickening dread overcame her, as she turned expecting to see her father; but the visitor was Mr. Everard. His step,—so unlike his usual rapid tread, that she had mistaken it for that of General Carrington,—bespoke the dejection of his heart. He took Geraldine’s offered hand, and continued to hold it, as he sat beside her in silence: at length releasing it with a slight movement of irritation, he said, “I have lived too long.”

“Ah no!” cried Geraldine, moved by the affliction of this old and faithful friend; and she hastened to console him for her loss, by a picture of the happiness she should enjoy, and by the pro-

mise to nurse him on his dying bed, should life and health be granted her; but Mr. Everard not only grieved for her loss, but was vexed that she could not remain a quiet rational Catholic, enjoying the many blessings God had given her, and dispensing good to all around her, as the widow of him whose noble name she bore; and the more he spoke, the more irritated he became, so that at length telling her he had no patience with her folly, and that his heart was breaking, he sank into silence, which Geraldine knew not how to break. She continued therefore to sit by this attached and beloved old friend, in silence like his own. He had not changed, but they could no longer sympathize, for she had been led by the grace of God beyond his spiritual experience, and he looked on her as on a dreamer. Still he sighed, for her dreams, he admitted, gave her a joy which he fain would have shared. Geraldine also pondered, and she also sighed, but her sigh was not for herself, and to the sigh succeeded a bright and grateful smile as she looked up to her future home.

The presence of Mr. Everard reminded her of those who had been deputed by God to aid her in her path towards Him, without any consciousness, on their part, that they were to work only for a limited time. Her uncles had each in her childhood assisted her religious attainment. The Warden by theological instructions, the humble

vicar by the living sermons of his example. Her first governess had, with the Warden, impressed her with a deep sense of the respect due to the visible Church ; her last governess, with her uncle Edmund, of the life hidden with Christ in God. When she began to feel that each principle might assist instead of opposing the other, and to perceive that they were parts taken from a whole, Mr. Everard assisted her to enter the Catholic Church, and she was then given, and she truly believed by the same guiding hand, to Sir Eustace De Grey. Geraldine in this retrospect acknowledged that she was not, at the time of her conversion, sufficiently matured in Catholicity, to have embraced the religious state ; for although she possessed more knowledge than many of its children of the vast treasures of the Church, it required the constant example of one congenial to her, for the practical working of Catholic truth to be received by such a high-spirited and fondly indulged creature as Geraldine Carrington. But Eustace De Grey had well fulfilled the part assigned him ; and then, his task accomplished, he too had been withdrawn, and his cherished pupil left to encounter the solitudes of the religious life. She was again lost in wonder, love, and praise ! The long silence was at length broken by Mr. Everard's giving fresh vent to his disappointment, that, on becoming a Catholic, she had not filled that post which he esteemed so

useful, so essential, for the mutual good understanding of both parties,—that of a moderate liberal Catholic, for the conciliation of Protestants.

“Mr. Everard,” said Geraldine, smiling, “I do not consider the conciliation of Protestants to be my primary duty. Truly grateful shall I be, if in following the dictates of my conscience, I sooth instead of alienating the devout of that body, but never by the grace of God will I take any step, or be withheld from taking it, by that sole motive. ‘Explanation, not concession,’ was Eustace De Grey’s motto; and like him, I am ever ready to give the former, however wearied by the repetition of questions, which for three hundred years have been answered.”

“Well!” sighed Mr. Everard, “we must all save our souls in the manner our conscience dictates, and certainly if you insist on being a nun, you could not have chosen an order less objectionable. The order of our Lady of Mercy should not be termed a new order, for it is very ancient, and has never become obsolete. The duties only have varied with the necessities of the times. When it was founded by James the First, of Arragon, in consequence of a vow made during captivity, the brothers, in addition to the usual vows, took that of redeeming captives, and the heroic deeds of those holy men, must inspire respect amongst Protestants as well as Catholics. In the present day,

the Brothers of Mercy, who are mostly settled in Germany, attend prisons, hospitals, and poor schools; performing the same good works as *Les Sœurs Grises*, and the Sisters of Charity. I am well pleased that a female community should bear the sweet name of Mercy, which I am surprised should not have been the case long ere this.’

“There is in Rome,” said Geraldine, “a female community, entitled ‘Le Sorelle della Misericordia.’ I went with the Contessa to visit their convent, or, as it is always termed in Italy, their monastery; and also saw their hospital, with which I was delighted; and just such a hospital, where within the enclosure the sick and dying are watched day and night by the appointed sisters, I trust to see erected with the convent, in the great court of the abbey ruin.”

“But why,” said Mr. Everard, “can you not be satisfied to be a benefactress to this order, and yet keep your usual habits of life? for let me tell you, that all the sensible rational Catholics, are as much, if not more annoyed, than your Protestant friends, by the imprudent ardour of your conduct. ‘Why,’ say they, ‘can she not remain in the same position of life she filled, before she embraced Catholicity? Why is she to rush on to a state not required by the Church, and strengthen the notion which Protestants entertain, that we are always in the clouds, and are never guided by common-sense in anything?’ ”

“My dear friend,” said Geraldine, “I trust, by the grace of God, to act more generously towards Him, than your timid or tepid Catholic critics would have done. In fact, had I listened to the worldly-wise counsels I have received during my Catholic life, I should not only have resisted the grace of God, but greatly disedified my pious Protestant friends, who though holding an incomplete religion, are faithful to their belief, and justly expect to see, in Catholics, the same fidelity to their more perfect faith. I am quite aware, that guided by human feeling, I might better remain the lady of rank and wealth in the world, but how then could I venture to petition, in the Litany common to both Protestant and Catholic, ‘From the neglect of thy holy inspirations, O Lord ! deliver us !’”

Geraldine began to feel these well-meant but ineffectual counsels very trying; her head ached intensely, and the nervous apprehension of being detained in London, until her father should arrive, increased her distress. Every carriage that passed on that side of the square, she feared might be his travelling equipage; and, when at length, a carriage did stop, and a knock was given, she started up, and uttering a hasty “God bless you,” to Mr. Everard, took flight; not to her own apartment, but to one of those prepared for the companions of her journey to ——. While listening in apprehension for the sound of the loved and

dreaded voice of the General, she was inexpressibly relieved to find, that the newly-arrived were the future occupants of the rooms, and she hastened to give them welcome, Mr. Everard having hastily departed. One of these was a lady, who, from her early childhood, had desired to consecrate herself to God in the religious life, and whose pure and fervent piety had already inspired our heroine with sincere respect and affection. The other, like herself, a convert, had been till now personally a stranger, but many sympathies bound their hearts together, and she felt the tie of religious sisterhood already binding them in permanent attachment.

Early on the following morning, the little band of aspirants to the veil, in which Jane Saunders was included, started from the metropolis to the sea-port town, whence the packet sailed. After the parting from her loved Isabel, Geraldine's heart became lighter every mile they travelled, yet she could not entirely divest herself of the apprehension, that before she could get on board, some one would be lying in wait to prevent her. It was late at night when they arrived at the chosen hotel in ——, but the steam-packet was not to start till the afternoon of the following day, which enabled them to rest in peace till the hour for mass, which they attended in a little chapel, not far from the hotel. Here Geraldine and her companions prepared to offer up the holy sacrifice and

communion, for all strengthening grace and protection during the passage, and for blessings on the land they were about to leave. Geraldine's previous agitation was now calmed, but she felt her spirits subdued and weak, and was comforted after waiting for some time, to see the priest enter the sanctuary, who, before he commenced the mass, turned round to the congregation with a written paper, and read, "Your prayers are humbly requested for the repose of the soul of the Lady Winefride Blount, who departed this life on the second instant. May her soul, and the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace."

Where can the heart better know of earthly bereavement than before the altar of God? The shock was great, but consolation abounded, and Geraldine earnestly besought that all the spiritual benefit derived from the Holy Sacrifice and Communion, might be shared by the precious soul of her much honoured and beloved friend, and was given grace to feel, at the conclusion of the service, strength and freedom of heart, as this almost last tie to earth had changed its position without weakening its strength, and had added one more to those which sweetly bound her to heaven.

A large sealed packet of letters and papers awaited Geraldine's return to the hotel, renewing her apprehensions of detention, when she saw the

handwriting of General Carrington, and was told, that the gentleman who brought it had been twice to see her the preceding evening, and again that morning. She now, by fervent aspirations, endeavoured to obtain strength and calm of mind, should her father, as she concluded he would, return thither, or else seek her on board the vessel; and without venturing to open the envelope, continued alternately to watch the door and the time-piece, when her expected visitor arrived, and proved to be once more Don Carlos.

The relief of seeing any one but her father, was so great, that Geraldine was scarcely troubled or disquieted by his presence. He brought fresh petitions from his sister, in addition to the letters, of which he was the bearer, and the assurance that to hear she had changed her mind, would cause the greatest joy to all.

“And, I have farther desired to speak to you, madam,” continued Don Carlos, “to atone for the warmth and consequent injustice, with which, at my last interview, I mentioned General Carrington. He has been a benefactor to my family during times of bitter calamity and adversity. As a protector, more than as a lover, he gave a home to Beatrice, and his marriage with a daughter of the house of Mendoza, was concealed from the liberal party, that, by seeming neutral, he might the more befriend us. The prolonged secrecy,

however, of after-years, must have been for your sake, Senora."

"For my sake!" repeated Geraldine.

"Yes: for greatly as he is now attached to Beatrice, he has always spoken of the cruelty of making any change in your fortune and prospects, before such an alliance as he concluded you would form, should take place. And now, madam, although I had determined not to intrude any mention of myself that could pain you during this last earthly interview, I will venture to ask for congratulations on the only subject which can possess for you sufficient interest—I am, by the grace of God, like yourself, about to enter a religious order."

"Thank God!" exclaimed our heroine, with an expression of such true sympathy and regard, that Don Carlos was repaid for all his anxiety and pain on her account.

"I have, during some years," continued he, "turned my thoughts towards the step I am now about to take, but your unexpected widowhood aroused feelings I had supposed conquered. Now I am cured by a far less painful stroke; I cannot dare to be the rival of my God; I yield every wish—every claim—I seek only to emulate your courageous example, and still in the world, though dead to it, to become one of the Society of Jesus."

Geraldine found herself at length on the deck

of the packet with her companions, amidst all the clamour and hurry of departure. She held the letters from her father unopened in her hand ; but the last interview with Don Carlos had brought such unexpected peace, that she no longer dreaded their contents, and before the vessel was lost to the sight of him who still watched its progress from the pier of —, she had become acquainted with the interesting details of the history already sketched to her. The agitation of the past fortnight, however, and the fatigue of rapid travelling, made her little able to bear the rough sea into which they now entered, and she was taken to the cabin with her head so confused and aching, that no thought or wish was distinct, save that of finding the shelter and peace of a convent.

CHAPTER X.

Hark, the vesper bell is stealing
O'er the waters soft and clear,
Nearer yet, and nearer pealing,
Now it bursts upon the ear.

. Jubilate, Amen. *Moore.*

AFTER a stormy and tedious passage, it was sweet repose to enter the lovely harbour of —, and glide between its verdant coasts into the city. At an accustomed landing-place, the vessel had stopped to put some of the passengers on shore, and one gentleman had come thence on deck enquiring for the English party, and introducing himself to them as one of the chaplains of the Catholic bishop of the city. An Irish welcome beamed in his benevolent countenance, and during the few miles which remained before they reached the quay, he became the protecting friend to all. It was just five-o'clock, the vesper hour in the order of Mercy, when they landed, but the service was over by the time the travellers had walked thither. Their reverend guide rang at the great door of the convent, and it was soon opened by a lay sister, whose

countenance told them they were expected. Behind her appeared a young novice, who, after a hasty glance, flitted from them, apparently to give notice of their arrival; for before they had all crossed the threshold, the door of the community room was thrown open, and the mother-superior, and several of the professed nuns, advanced to meet their new sisters. Geraldine was too full of emotion to speak, but this emotion was of so happy a kind, that it shone in her countenance, and supplied the place of words. To find herself once more surrounded by religious, and, after all her struggles, doubts, and difficulties, to be amongst them as an aspirant to the same blessed life, was a thought so exquisite, that her soul seemed suspended from earth in foretaste of its union with her God, and the soft voices of the sisters came as from a distance to her ear. Amongst them mingled tones which told of Scotland, and with a momentary hope, which reason soon told her was delusion, she thought of Katherine Graham. The voice was that of sister Margaret, a high-born, but humble-minded Scotch lady, who had been several years professed in this order. Geraldine at length looked round on the community: amongst the professed she could at first distinguish no one from the other. She enquired which was the mother-superior, and as she was only answered by smiles, fixed on the apparently eldest, but this

sister, smilingly, assured her, that she was only "Sister Mary Placida," adding, as she bowed to a younger nun who stood near her, "this is our reverend mother."

Geraldine looked at the thoughtful holy countenance of her mother in religion, and, raising her hand to her lips, said, "I trust to prove myself your dutiful child."

The English sisters were then taken to see the chapel and choir, their cells, and the novices' apartments, in which they were to become as little children. After taking some refreshment in the refectory, they returned to the community room, except Geraldine, who stole back into the choir, and thence into the chapel. The deepening twilight threw all into shadow, save where the ever-burning lamp shed its soft light around the tabernacle. The sacristan was occupied in arranging the altar for the morrow, but in a short time she withdrew, and first looking around, to be secure from any living witness, our grateful Geraldine threw herself prostrate before the altar. "O Jesus!" cried she, "my God, and my all, behold me thine for ever! Receive my whole being, my will, my understanding, and all the powers of my soul and spirit. Thou gavest them, and to thee I devote them,—to thee who hast chosen me to dwell beneath the roof, where thou thyself dost dwell. O let me retire, in spirit as in form, for

ever from the world, and take thy hidden life for the rule and copy of mine. Give me grace to honour thy silence, on our altar, by a constant spirit of holy recollection and prayer,—thy poverty, obedience, and adorable sanctity, by detachment from all things. Above all ! O loving bread of eternal life, remove all obstacles to my frequently and worthily receiving thee ; and grant me so tender a devotion to this holy mystery, that I may live in thee and thou in me, for ever !” As Geraldine thus prayed, the bell sounded the five minutes’ warning before the service of matins and lauds in the choir, which in this order are said over-night, and she returned to the stall she had been told was for her, and remained there until the community, including her English sisters, assembled. To her great satisfaction, Jane, although to be a lay-sister, was admitted, whose rosy dimpled face shone with delight.

What blessed peace reigned in the heart of Geraldine, as she watched each veiled form enter, and make the genuflection at the grating of the choir, before taking her place noiselessly ; every movement proving her recollection of the presence of her heavenly spouse. Six o’clock then struck, and the Angelus, with the double-toll of this order, sounded from the convent bell, bidding welcome to the new daughters of the blessed Mary, who joined their voices in the angelic salutation, while

their hearts added, "The mercies of my God will I sing for ever !"

On leaving the choir, the English sisters were informed the bishop had arrived to see them, and with equal surprise and pleasure they heard themselves greeted by this benevolent and venerable prelate. Had they before felt in "a strange land," his welcome would have reassured them; but warm-hearted Ireland can prove a strange land to no one who possesses a heart to respond to kindness.

It was some weeks before the new postulants were required to keep strictly the rules of the noviceship; and in this time they had become familiarized to the routine of the day, the times and places of strict silence, the different forms to be observed, and the duties of the choir. They had also been taken severally with the sisters to the public institutions for the sick, and to the private dwellings of the poor—more as a recreation than a duty, and everything was carefully avoided that could hurry or oppress the "*infant* band;" for such, in convent life, they were.

As the time approached, so anxiously expected, when our heroine and her companions were to be publicly received as novices, the former, who had expected to feel only joy, found an annoyance in her path which troubled her the more, as she had sincerely desired to resign her will, on crossing the threshold of the convent. This attack of self-will,

which we record, because it was the last, was on the subject of the secular attire in which the candidate for the religious garb is always expected to appear on the day of her clothing, and to which Geraldine's heart for awhile refused to submit. Not only had she laid her long tresses in the tomb of her earthly love, but, before leaving the Hall, she had given to her young cousins and their mother the ornaments and wardrobe which had become useless to her; and to think or speak again on the subject of dress was most irksome to her. She listened, however, to the representations made to her, and owned, on reflection, how much there was of human feeling in wishing to retain her mourning garb, and how singular and ostentatious it would be to appear thus, when surrounded by her sister-candidates; and having thus conquered herself on this point, she kept to her resolution of yielding entirely to the nun appointed to superintend the toilette of the postulants, even should she bespangle her like Columbine.

There was, however, no reason to dread this result from the simple and elegant taste of sister Josephine, whose arrangements proceeded without farther molestation, that they might be completed before the distant preparation for the ceremony of reception, which begins a month previously, by spiritual lecture in the noviceship appropriate to the event, accompanied by pious exhortations and

encouragements on the part of the mistress. Mother Juliana fulfilled her duty on this, as on every other occasion, with the calm simplicity which marked her character. She believed herself far less fit than many of her sisters for the important post assigned her, but being there by the appointment of her superiors, she permitted nothing to discourage or elate her; and no one could perceive, by word or look, that any internal struggle had been requisite to overcome her natural feelings of diffidence and repugnance to the work assigned her. Geraldine, on her side, came to the noviceship with equal simplicity, being well aware, that in the religious life, she had yet much to learn. She was not wearied by the repetition of the same warnings and encouragement, remembering the words of St. Paul,—“ To repeat the same things unto you, to me indeed it is not grievous, and for you it is safe;” and reflecting, that if this highly favoured apostle, who, in the revelation given him, had abundance of material for the spiritual entertainment of his hearers, thought it more profitable for them to hear the oft-repeated injunctions to a holy life,—well might she desire for herself the same course to be pursued.

On entering the convent, she had taken the infancy of Jesus, as the mystery on which her mind should ponder and her heart delight: there to find inexhaustible sources for example, encouragement,

and reward, in the life immediately before her. In remembrance, and in honour of the Deity, who became a silent infant, Geraldine was silent: remembering and knowing His obedience, she was obedient in heart as in deed: and the precious secrets of the hidden life, which she had already deeply studied and accepted, she now willingly heard as if for the first time; for how could her heart refuse the repetition of instructions on subjects which had become, through the contemplation of the infancy of Jesus, the food of her spiritual being?

It was just at this time that our heroine was invited by the mother-superior to pass half an hour with her, during the few days of severe indisposition which had attacked the mistress of the novices. This invitation was not intended as a command; but the slightest intimation of the superioress's wishes was sufficient for Geraldine, and she well knew that these short periods of spiritual converse would be among the most profitable of the day. And thus it proved; for not only was it beneficial to her mind to give utterance to the thoughts which had accumulated during the day, but she at length won from the mother-superior more of confidential advice, and gained a greater insight into that holy soul, than she had yet been privileged to obtain; for in these conferences Geraldine's whole soul was opened, and few could have withheld their own.

One evening that our heroine had taken her usual kneeling posture by the reverend mother, and had placed her clasped hands in hers, the mother-superior bade her give God thanks for the grace of religious submission and obedience. "Your mistress," said she, "reports well of your docility and meekness hitherto; and although you have as yet had no trials, she argues well from your whole deportment. You well know, dear sister, that to obtain and preserve the grace of religious obedience, the precursive grace of humility is essential. Without this virtue be deeply and firmly rooted in the heart, the sweetest and most ready obedience will fail in the hour of trial."

"And therefore I cannot depend on mine," said our heroine; "for I am very far from possessing humility."

"It is the humble who feel most the want of perfect humility," said the mother-superior; "others are ever in a state of self-defence."

"I fear," said Geraldine, "to have unconsciously deceived Mother Juliana, by a compliance and suavity which results only from my sense of the fitness of things relative to her position and mine. She, a professed nun, of several years' standing, holding a post of great trust and importance in her convent; I, not yet even a novice, with all my religious career before me, and its

virtues known only in theory. How can I avoid paying her a respectful deference and obedience?"

"And what is humility," said the mother-superior, "but a just view of others and of ourselves, or what you term a 'sense of the fitness of things,' from a consideration of their relative position. You and your sister postulants are the last in this religious house, and you feel it to be so; are not disturbed at it; but willing to look up to all, as your superiors in the religious life. Is not this humility?"

"I think it is my judgment that is convinced," said Geraldine; "my sense of justice, of truth. I am in a humble position; and as I am contented with it, I may seem to be humble; but supposing I were in Mother Juliana's place, and she in mine, I should, from the same love of justice and truth, esteem myself no longer the last in the house; and I have been thinking," continued she, "that the greatest obstacle to humility is the love of truth."

"Oh! no," cried the mother-superior, "all the virtues must harmonize, and not embarrass each other."

"Yes," said Geraldine, "all the attributes of God must harmonize, to constitute perfection; but as there are some attributes of God not given to the imitation of man, such as His omnipotence, omnipresence, &c., so there are virtues which belong to man alone, such as gratitude, contrition,

holy fear, humility; and inasmuch as justice and truth are attributes of God, and humility is not, so whenever truth and humility clash, truth, being the essence of the Divinity, must prevail."

"You are getting very metaphysical," said the mother-superior; "but I think that you will find your difficulties removed, by considering that we are required to think humbly of ourselves, but not of the office we hold,—we then preserve perfect truth; for the more highly we esteem the post of trust and authority we hold in the house of God, the more we must feel our own incompetency to fill it. This is well proved in Mother Juliana. There is no one more exact, nay, even scrupulously so, in requiring that all respect shall be paid to the important office she holds, and at the same time no one who humbles herself more before God and her superior, for what she deems the imperfect manner in which she upholds and fulfils the duties of her charge." As the mother-superior gave this testimony to the humble fidelity of the mistress of novices, the still weightier charge she herself held was in her mind; and, as she paused and sighed, the tears rose to her eyes.

Geraldine looked on that youthful brow, where thought and care were thus early stamped, though not so much so as to destroy the placid and confiding expression given by heaven. She then thought of the contrast which that countenance

presented when at recreation amongst the novices, over whom she only held a distant and rarely enforced authority, and amongst whom she was once more the happy sister.

Geraldine pressed her hand in silence, and hoped she would speak of herself; but she did not, through humility, which was indeed profound. At length she said—"A sister should neither seek nor shrink from responsibility. If a charge be given her by her superiors, she should take it as coming from God, and seek in it His honour and glory alone. Whatever mistakes she might commit in the discharge of this trust, she should humble herself for them, but not suffer these mere errors of judgment to cause disquietude, when conscious of having had a pure motive."

"Whatever merit I may have hereafter in obeying my mistress of novices," said our heroine, as she gave welcome to the mother-superior at her next little conference, "I shall have none in obeying my reverend mother; for I find in it not only no effort, but sweet comfort."

"I perceive that you do," said the superioress, "and it was for this I bade you bless God, who has thus early bestowed on you the grace of religious obedience."

"I have been considering since yesterday," said Geraldine, "that obedience is but a conditional virtue."

“What mean you by that?”

“I term that virtue conditional,” said Geraldine, “which requires a clause, and which in certain cases would cease to be a virtue. The virtue of obedience requires the clause of ‘in all that is not sin,’ when exercised towards man. To make obedience, then, a positive virtue, it must be, as in the religious state, the effect of self-renouncement; and for the promotion of God’s glory in the peace and order it must produce in the houses devoted to His service.”

“It is God you obey, in obeying your superior, as you already know and feel,” said the superioress.

“It is that,” said Geraldine, “that will make me even willingly yield my understanding, that precious gift of God, and of which no human being can deprive me. The submission of the will was never difficult to me, even towards those who have no claim to it; for I like to see people happy in their own way, and I care not for times, and seasons, and external acts. The submission of the understanding also, is not difficult in matters which do not affect the moral principle; but then, to curb the freedom of this inward world—to touch the balance of justice there poisoning—to bid the weights mount up, and the empty scale descend—the hand and voice must be consecrated by God’s delegated power!”

“You have now read all our holy rules,” replied

the mother-superior, "which I am bound to enforce; your mind, therefore, may be perfectly at rest respecting the 'moral principle.' This rule is next to the Gospel in our regard. It would be impossible for any superior to enforce it, and yet infringe on God's commandments, for His holy spirit breathes through every part of it; and, as I have heard you say, it might have been written by St. John, so lovely is the charity it prescribes, and the peace which pervades the whole. Were it possible for any one to command you to do or say anything obviously contrary to this our rule, you would not be bound to obey."

"I am satisfied," said Geraldine: "the holy rule of this order is a summary of Christian doctrine, and a commentary on the beatitudes. In performing it I must fulfil the adorable will of God; and blessed, therefore, for ever be the vow of obedience which will insure this. No one can live in greater peace than she who, after due consideration of every part of the life proposed to her, accepts it, as comprising all that can best nourish and conduct her soul to God; and then resigns herself entirely to it, without care, without solicitude, without a thought of self-guidance or opinion. This obedience, which is called 'blind,' can scarcely be so termed, unless it be the voluntary blindness of one who, having first ascertained that the road he is about to take leads to his desired home, resigns himself in sleep to his guide, without waking

to look at every sign-post or mile-stone on the way."

"The obedience due to those who hold the higher offices, must be likewise rendered by the novice, to all who may be appointed to direct her," said the superioress; "but a humble and sincere spirit of obedience will make this likewise easy to you."

"If there be a race of beings for whom I feel commiseration," said Geraldine, "it is those in subordinate office; those who hold delegated authority. I speak of the world, for I expect not to find in a regular convent any caprice, jealousy, or cruel cowardice, from the higher powers, which would lead them, in times of danger to themselves, to desert those who act under them. Such was the faithless Charles to Strafford. In convent government, it appears to me, there should be as implicit obedience rendered to the one appointed by the mother-superior as to herself, for in disobeying the delegate I should disobey the principal, as in disobeying the principal I should disobey God. But in this obedience, which, I trust, you will find me invariably pay to every sister appointed over me, there is no humility: it will only result, as I before said, from my sense of what is just and rational, and the course to be pursued by every one possessed of common-sense."

"You are determined," said the mother-superior, smiling, "to resist all vain glory."

“ But just imagine, dear reverend mother, the unfortunate delegate, who whether sacristan, infirmarian, or whatever post she held, should find me independent of every command but your’s.”

“ Indeed she would be an object for my sincere commiseration,” said the mother-superior ; “ but, as you justly observe, such a position of affairs would never be permitted in a convent, where the principle of obedience, to be consistent, must pervade every rank. In our visitation of the sick this humble submission is very essential. All must be calm, and sweet, and edifying, in the manner of the sisters when they leave the enclosure ; and to ensure this, the wishes of the elder sister must be law to the younger.”

Geraldine thought of, and repeated that part of the rule which related to the deportment of the sisters, and to the feeling which would ensure it :

“ Two sisters shall always go out together : the greatest caution and gravity must be observed passing through the streets : walking neither in slow nor hurried pace, not stopping to converse, nor saluting those whom they meet, keeping close without leaning, preserving recollection of mind, and going forward as if they expected to see their divine Redeemer in each poor habitation, since he has said, ‘ Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I.’ ”

CHAPTER XVII.

“ Hail solitude ! how sweet thy shade,
For holy contemplation made.”
Here will I sit, to peace consigned,
And leave a troubled world behind ;
Till angels waft me hence, to rest
In Paradise among the blest :
With hermits, there to taste of bliss,
Who walked with God, in shades like this.

Ode by Jones of Nayland.

WITH grateful heart Geraldine saw arrive the eve of the spiritual retreat, which commences eight days previously to the reception of novices, and terminates after mass and communion on the morning of the ceremony. After she and her sister recluses had received the parting blessing from the mother-superior, and from the community their sisterly kiss and promise of prayers, they went immediately to the choir, to read the meditation proper for that night in presence of the blessed sacrament. Here Geraldine raised her heart in thanksgiving for the blessed prospect before her. She was on the eve of her spiritual journey into the desert, and already did she enter

into the rapture which her soul was about to enjoy. She had, indeed, with the psalmist, longed for the time when, alone with God, apart from creatures, and all human sources of refreshment dried up in her heart, the dew of divine grace from the sanctuary might refresh her spirit to behold his power and glory. She had watched for her divine spouse from the dawn of day—her soul had thirsted after him. O, by how many titles did her whole being belong to him, and now her soul was replenished with his benediction, and filled with rapturous joy! Never since the spiritual favours bestowed on her previous to her widowhood, had Geraldine received such abundant graces. She began the points of her meditation, but her mind grasped at once all that could be written, and her heart required no stimulus. “My beloved to me, and I to him!” all was comprised in this union of the creature with her Creator—the redeemed and her Redeemer, the sanctified and the sanctifier, the penitent in renewed innocence, and the God of all purity and love.

Geraldine entered her cell, and its very walls seemed strengthened in peace. “O, whence is this to me!” cried she, sinking on her knees, “that thou, my God, shouldst visit me with such abundant mercy? Well do I know, that in an instant all can be withdrawn, and I be left a trembling,

desolate creature. All this is thy free gift, therefore will I praise, and bless, and love thee with all my being."

Thus passed the eight days of Geraldine's retreat, with but one exception occurring to disturb this holy peace. This was a return of that strong attraction to the cloister, which had before induced her to resign this her first vocation, and which the spiritual consolations experienced during this retreat seemed to favour; but our heroine well knew this to be a temptation from the enemy, and therefore resisted it with success, and hailed, with equal joy to that with which she had entered her retreat, the happy morning which bade her "come forth from the desert leaning upon her beloved."

Little mattered it to Geraldine that crowds were assembled to witness the ceremony, or that she was once more arrayed in bridal attire. She felt nothing but the presence of the blessed sacrament, of the bishop and priests of God, and of the holy brethren of the religious orders, who were around her. Among them also stood that English priest, whose feelings were the most personally interested in the sacred scene.

Before the procession of religious moved towards the choir, headed by the cross-bearer, and singing the hymn "O, Gloriosa Virginum," Geraldine and her companions had asked, on their knees, the mother-superior's blessing, and her permission to take the names they had chosen in religion.

The sermon was preached from the altar by the provincial of the Capuchin Friars, who was the confessor extraordinary to the convent, during which the postulants were seated before him ; and the glowing picture he drew of the religious life, especially that devoted to "Mercy," came with double effect from one whose unremitting labours, amongst the suffering and dying poor, were well known to all who heard him. At the conclusion of the sermon the postulants were led up the steps of the altar, and thus interrogated severally by the bishop.

"My child, what do you demand?"

Our heroine, who was the eldest, first replied,

"The mercy of God, and the holy habit of religion."

"Is it with your own free will," said the Bishop, "that you demand the holy habit of religion?"

"Yes, my lord," replied our heroine.

"Reverend mother," said the Bishop, turning to the superioress, "have you made the necessary enquiries, and are you satisfied?"

"Yes, my lord," replied she.

"My child," continued the Bishop to Geraldine, "have you a firm intention to persevere in religion to the end of your life, and do you hope to have sufficient strength to carry constantly the sweet yoke of our Lord Jesus Christ solely for the love and fear of God?"

“ Relying on the mercy of God,” replied Geraldine, “ I hope to be able to do so.”

The Bishop then said, rising from his chair, “ What God has commenced in you may He perfect. May the Lord banish from you the old man with his works.”

To which, Geraldine having answered “ Amen,” she arose from her knees, and made way for each of her companions in turn. When all had replied to the bishop’s questions, they retired, with the mother-superior and assistant, to exchange their worldly dress for that of religion.

While this was in progress, the assembled voices of the priests intoned, in solemn chant, the psalm, “ In exitu Israel;” and these deep impressive sounds were prolonged, till a female voice, floating in liquid sweetness, took up another strain, demanding, as the novices were descried slowly advancing, “ Quæ est ista,” &c. “ Who is she that cometh up from the desert, flowing with delights, leaning upon her beloved? Thou art all fair, my beloved, meek and beautiful. Come from Libanus, my spouse, come from Libanus. Come, thou shalt be crowned.”

The novices, having returned to the altar, then knelt during the prayers applicable to their change of dress. After which, the mother-superior, receiving the leathern cincture of the order from the bishop, put it on the eldest novice, while he

said, "When thou wast younger, thou didst gird thyself, and didst walk where thou wouldst, but when thou shalt be old, another shall gird thee. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen."

Geraldine then kneeling, the mother-assistant took off the simple veil which had merely served, until she should from the altar receive that which was blessed. The bishop, then holding this blessed veil above her head, said, "Receive the white veil, the emblem of inward purity, that thou mayest follow the Lamb without spot, and mayest walk with Him in white. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen." The mother-superior then fixed the veil, and Geraldine, rising, received the white choir cloak of the order from the bishop, and presenting it to the superioress, was clothed in it, the bishop saying, "May the Lord restore to thee the robe of immortality, which thou didst lose in the prevarication of thy first parent. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen." Being now clothed in the full habit of the order, Geraldine again knelt, holding her blessed taper, while the bishop, after sprinkling her with holy water, prayed in an audible voice, extending his hands over her.

Theresa, Emma, and little Jane, then severally advanced, the latter receiving from the hands of

the bishop, the lay sister's white apron, worn under the cincture and beads, in badge of servitude. After which, turning to the altar, in the name of each novice, the bishop intoned the "Regnum mundi," &c. "The empire of the world, and all the grandeur of this earth, I have despised for the love of our Lord Jesus Christ, whom I have seen, whom I have loved, in whom I have believed, and towards whom my heart inclineth." After the first sentence, the female voice and full chorus alternately sang the rest, when the novices in unison took up the strain, saying, "My heart hath uttered a good word, I speak my works to the king. I have chosen to be an abject in the house of my Lord Jesus Christ. Glory be to the Father, &c." As the chorus finished the "Quem vidi," the novices prostrated themselves before the altar; the bishop, the religious sisterhood, and all knelt; while, in the solemn Gregorian chant, was sung the "Veni Creator."

Many holy and inspiring prayers followed; and then, the mother-assistant directing the novices to rise, conducted them to the mother-superior, to whom, in succession, they knelt; while she, raising, embraced them, and the sisterly kiss of peace and welcome now followed with all the nuns, while the joyous psalm was sung in full chorus, "Ecce quam bonum." "Behold how good, and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity," &c.;

at the end of which, the religious sisters retired from the sanctuary of the chapel, through the choir, into the convent, and the congratulations recommenced with less form and much cheerfulness and affection;—the new novices, with an especial tie of interest, gazing on each other, and giving heartfelt thanks to their heavenly spouse, who had thus called and blessed them.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Where duty went, she went : with justice even,
And went with meekness, charity and love
Where'er a tear was dried : a wounded heart
Bound up : a bruised spirit with the dew
Of sympathy anointed : or a pang
Of honest suffering soothed : or injury
Repeated oft, as oft by love forgiven.—*Pollock.*

OUR novice, Mary Paula, was now introduced more fully to the external duties of her new life, and began to tread the lanes, alleys, and back streets of the city. With fresh affection, she now listened to that part of her holy rule, which related to “The visitation of the sick;” prepared herself quickly, and went immediately to visit the Blessed Sacrament, to offer to her Divine Master the action she was about to perform, to ask from Him the graces necessary to preserve His glory and the salvation of souls. “O blessed Jesus,” cried she, “for Thee alone I leave this enclosure, and not for any sensible satisfaction in the indulgence of benevolence and compassion. Be Thou with me, that I may indeed see Thy reflected image in the person of each afflicted fellow-creature, and, in

serving him, may serve Thee, who art my God, and my all."

At first, Geraldine did not witness anything far exceeding that which she had seen amongst the Irish poor in Elverton, and nothing to equal the picture which her imagination had drawn; for, until her courage was known, her superior did not send her to the most wretched parts; but at length, she climbed ladders, crept through trap-doors, and descended into cellars, to scenes of such misery, that she owned to have seen nothing comparable to them.

Being on every occasion the junior sister, her part was to carry the corporal relief, while her senior administered the spiritual, and Geraldine, a grateful listener to the soothing and encouragement, or to the devout prayers of this sister, felt, that indeed they were serving their divine spouse in the persons of his afflicted brethren. Yet all that she could derive of spiritual consolation from this branch of her duty, was incomplete, until she heard the announcement that she was to accompany the mother-superior to the county jail.

"Sick and in prison, and you visited me," was at length to remove from her heart the fearful negative that had been added to the sentence in the convent of —: and as Geraldine walked in the prescribed silence, and mentally said the Litany of our Blessed Lady, by the side of her

who was in her confidence,—the united kingdoms,—nay, the whole world, could not have produced a happier being.

The county jail is a magnificent building, conveying no mournful exterior effect, and the entrance and outward court are much like those of a fortified castle: but as Geraldine followed her reverend mother to the inner compartments, and read on the iron doors, “Untried ward,” “Condemned ward,” the chain of the prisoner sounded in her heart, mingling with the groans of his anguish. Their destination that day was to the female prison, and Geraldine, who had heard from her “sisters,” a description of the state of morals and manners amongst the prisoners when they first visited them, was surprised and gratified by their orderly behaviour and cordial welcome. They seemed in their desolation to regard as their true friends the Sisters of Mercy; and those who had entered hardened in guilt, and those who had been tricked and enticed into a first offence, had alike reason to bless God, who had overruled their present punishment for their soul’s good. The convicts were an interesting portion of the prisoners. Many of them were simple country girls, consigned to banishment for their first offence, and some of them had not forgotten the pious instructions given them in their childhood, at the schools of the presentation convents, which

order may indeed claim the blessings of the poor: Notwithstanding the subsequent neglect of their religion, the truths thus early imbibed, like bread cast on the waters, returned after many days; and when these poor creatures found that they were going on the wide ocean, and to a strange land, without those means of grace, which, when around them, they had heeded not, their grief and remorse were great: no religious sisters—no priest—no altar. The sisters comforted them with hopes, that if they were sent to Australia, they would find all these blessings; the Sisters of Charity for that mission being about to depart thither, and the poor creatures' promises were for the time most sincere, that they would keep up amongst themselves, while on board, the practices of devotion they had either learned or revived in the jail.

There was amongst the prisoners, detained for a few months only, an old woman, who was in the constant habit of making the jail her winter residence, either by breaking some window, or performing any other exploit that she had calculated would not involve her in more than was convenient. By the time, however, of her introduction to our heroine, she was beginning to repent of "serving," as she called it, "so hard a master as the devil;" and promised that the next Christmas, which would be the ninth she had spent in the jail, should, with the help of God, be the last in

which she had done her "*old* master's work." To this she had now steadily adhered during the greater part of her last imprisonment, and her active powers were laudably exercised in behalf of all new comers, inducing them to conform to the orderly and pious habits established by the Sisters of Mercy, and promising them that they "would not know themselves, they would be so happy."

Not many days after her visit to the jail, our heroine was taken to the hospital of the House of Industry, which was the most fatiguing labour she had been hitherto engaged in. Before she started with one of the professed sisters who generally attended the public institutions, Geraldine's silent obedience was put to the test in rather an amusing manner. The day was intensely hot—not a cloud was to be seen, even in the sky of that oft-rained-on city; and she had, as the junior sister, just taken up the accustomed basket, when a heavy cotton umbrella was placed in her hand. In her astonishment, she whispered, "Sister, do you expect rain?" "No, sister," replied sister Placida, "but I would advise you not to venture to the hospital without an umbrella. I never go without one to our use;" and showing Geraldine that she also held one, she left the enclosure; our novice followed, and they spoke no more. "Never venture to the hospital without an umbrella!" thought she, "perhaps it is to the hospital of the

Lunatic Asylum we are bound;” and the story heard in childhood, of the royal Bengal tiger diverted from his prey by the parasol of a lady, came afresh to her mind. They arrived at the outer court of the House of Industry, and Geraldine, who had been previously shown over the whole building by the devoted priest of the parish, was not a little relieved to find sister Placida directing her steps towards those who had retained their senses. On that day they were bound to the men’s wards, and on entering the first of them, sister Placida turned, and whispered, “ Sister, you are not to follow me, but to go regularly down the ward on your side, visiting every bed.”

Geraldine’s heart began to flutter!—uncurtained, and unemployed, lay a row of formidable looking beings, who would watch every movement, and listen to every word. She moved towards the first bed, on which appeared a head so extraordinary, that she doubted whether it were human; an unshaved beard, and a fur cap drawn over the face of the sleeper, producing an effect far from encouraging; and Geraldine being coward enough to rejoice that he slept, passed to the next bed, where lay a very old man. In her softest manner she enquired about his health, and listened to a voluble and detailed account of all his complaints, for they were many, and life hung by a slender thread. When, however, she proceeded to spiritual mat-

ters, his fluency was gone. He "knew nothing of them things, they were not in his time." Geraldine endeavoured to convince him, that to "love and serve Almighty God in this world, that we might be happy with Him for ever in the next," had been the great concern of every one when he was young, as well as in the present day.

"Nuns and ladies did not go about in my time," said he. "I know nothing about them."

"But, my dear friend," said Geraldine, "you have heard of Almighty God?"

"No, indeed, He was not in my time," replied he; "I know nothing about Him."

"Then you must begin to try and know Him now," said Geraldine, much shocked.

"I'll tell you what," said he, "if you should be coming again, may be you'll bring me a little tobacco. It amuses me as I'm lying here!"

Geraldine promised the tobacco, and at that instant, the old man was seized with so violent and spasmodic a cough, that she feared he might die at once in his ignorance and unconcern. He revived, however, and seemed pleased that she had not left him. "You are very ill," said Geraldine, "and most probably will not live many days, perhaps not many hours, and where do you think you shall go when you die?"

"Why, you'll be a clever woman," said he, "if you can tell me that."

“If you will promise to do as I tell you,” said Geraldine, “I will promise that you will go where you will be happier and better off, than you have ever been here :” and she began to teach him, in the simplest manner, the elements of religion ; strongly suspecting, however, as she proceeded, that his ignorance was partly feigned, and thus it proved ; so that, before she left him, her chief efforts were directed to convince him of his guilt, and move him to contrition for having denied his God. Careful not to weary him, however, she at length left him, having gained from him the promise, that till he saw one of the sisters again, he would, from time to time, repeat the words of the publican, “God be merciful to me a sinner !” endeavouring to enter into their contrite spirit ; and also, to take a review of his past life, in distant preparation for confession.

In the next bed lay one who presented a striking contrast to the careless old man. He was a youth in the last stage of a decline, and whose heart and mind were already in “the better land.” Geraldine, who possessed a keen perception of the spiritual progress of other minds, attempted not here to teach, but she was able to cheer and sooth, by sympathy with his holy thoughts, this dying saint.

Thus passed she on, with kind looks and soft words ; suggesting thoughts of patience and of love for Jesus’ sake, to those in pain ; and was still ab-

sorbed in this employ, when sister Placida informed her they must depart. But on their way, they stopped at one of the wards, to see, according to promise, a poor man, who had, as sister Placida hoped, consented to an operation the day before.

“How are you, Terence?”

“Ah, lady! so you are come. Praise be to God! I have had my leg taken off. There were thirty surgeons round me, and I did not mind it a bit. All owing to you, lady, and your comforting words; and, most of all, may God bless you for giving me this,” showing them a small brass crucifix. “I held it, and looked at it all the time they were cutting through my flesh and bone; and, as you told me, I joined my sufferings to *His* sufferings, and He gave me strength. I never uttered one cry, for I never lost the grasp of this—and here it is again. May the Lord bless you for the loan.”

“You may keep it, Terence.”

“Ah! then I am a happy man. Praise be to God and to his blessed Mother, and may they receive you strait from earth to heaven. Angels that you are!—Glory be to his holy name!”

Sweet and calm is the holy silence of the convent after the fatigues of the duties without; when the mind that has laboured, and the heart that has bled, for others, may enter its rest with God. The sisters are under the precious obligation, by

their rule, to again visit the blessed sacrament on their return to the convent; thank their Lord Jesus Christ for his protection; humble themselves before him for any imperfections they may have fallen into; and most earnestly pray, that whatever assistance has been afforded through his grace and mercy may conduce to his own glory, the salvation of their souls, and those whom they have instructed.

Welcome, also, in its due course, is the cheerful evening recreation, which in the order of Mercy the novices and postulants pass with the professed sisters in the community-room, where all are encouraged to be joyful, as a duty towards each other, and a tribute of gratitude due to God.

Geraldine was always willing to contribute her share to the general amusement, but her chief gratification was to be a listener to the various groups around her, especially when the occurrences of the day were being recounted by a certain young professed sister, who was the general prize at recreation both to young and old, but of which she was perfectly unconscious, as well as of the reason why every one laughed at her adventures; the simplicity of her character preventing the discovery.

“Reverend mother,” cried a young novice, “do make sister Mary Lucy tell us why she is sad.”

“Sad!” repeated the mother-superior, turning to look at sister Mary Lucy’s sweet dimpled face, “I never saw any one less guilty of sadness.”

“Oh, but she confesses, reverend mother, to being very near it,” said the novice Mary Agnes.

“In that case,” said the mother-superior, entering into the jest, “if you begin your confessions at recreation, sister Mary Lucy, you must finish them here.”

“Ah! well, reverend mother dear, sure it is just nothing at all—it is only the old men and women.”

“What of them—were they cross to-day?”

“They were a little cross, reverend mother.”

“But you, a professed sister, would not think of minding that.”

“No, indeed, reverend mother, I know that I ought to be glad to suffer, instead of having any reward here, and I should not think of the crossness, only of the troubles that come on me in consequence. I think,” continued she, after a little pause, “I think the old women are crosser than the old men—perhaps they are cold—no, they cannot be cold this weather—perhaps it is too warm they are, poor old women. I had better not say they are cross, had I, reverend mother?”

“Ah! here is a regular scruple,” cried the young Agnes.

“ Ah ! no, fie, sister dear, it is not a scruple ; is it, reverend mother ? ”

“ I cannot decide these knotty questions here,” said the mother-superior, laughing. “ Go on at once with your story.”

“ Well, I will, reverend mother. I said that the old men were not so very cross, but there was one old man outdid all the old women. I only asked him if it were long since he was at his duty, and he growled terribly at me, reverend mother. Indeed he did, though I looked very sweet and kind at him, poor old man. But, then, at last he became much more gentle and amiable, and he even promised me that he would see the priest. He was a sailor, and he said, ‘ Bless you, I have not been to my duty these fifteen years, but I’ll overhaul my conscience to please you, for, sure enough, the ship I was in was hell afloat.’ ”

“ And how came you to be so successful with him ; was it by your fervent prayers ? ”

“ Ah ! that is the very thing,” sighed sister Mary Lucy ; “ sure, I think it was, perhaps, by no prayers at all, for I told him that when I next came I would bring him ‘ a dust of snuff,’ and that warmed his cross heart, poor old man.”

“ Gently, gently,” said the mistress of novices to her merry children, who had given a general shout.

“ And you were feeling a little uncomfortable,”

said the superior, "because I have desired you to make no more promises at the hospital; well, cheer up, because for this time you are forgiven."

"Ah, reverend mother dear, there are more—"

"What, more promises?"

"Sure, there—there the cross old women. That is, I mean, the sick old women."

"And the more cross they were, the more you promised them. Is that it?"

"They were very badly off for beads, reverend mother, and one old woman said she could read very well if she had a prayer-book and spectacles; and there were two who had no caps, and so I said we would see about it all."

"Is that the whole?"

"Not quite, reverend mother. Somehow or other, I promised three pair of spectacles, some tea, and a little more snuff, and that is really all."

"And how are you to get all these things, sister?"

"Ah, reverend mother dear, you will tell the sisters to be charitable when I go a begging to them."

"That may do very well for the caps, for I will desire sister Mary Josephine to give you some calico from the poor's store-room, but what are you to do for the other articles?"

"Reverend mother, I know of a shilling—really a whole shilling—may I have it?"

“ How can you possibly have a shilling, sister Mary Lucy ?”

“ I have it not, reverend mother, but when I swept out the refectory since supper, I found a shilling on the floor, just where mother Burser sits.”

“ And why did you not take it to her ?”

“ Ah, no, reverend mother, I left it just where it was, because it seemed to be there on purpose for the old women, and I thought you would let me have it. May I fetch it ?”

On receiving a nod of assent, away tripped sister Mary Lucy, and returned exultingly with the shilling ; but her return was the signal for a general attack of—“ Ah, sister dear, you would not be keeping all the shilling for yourself,” and, “ Ah, sister dear, if you had seen the misery I have witnessed to-day in the private visiting,” &c. till in a few minutes the twelve pence, or rather the twenty-four half-pennies, were distributed by promise, and the poor owner exclaimed, “ Sure, I have nothing left for myself and the old women !”

“ Alas !” thought Geraldine, “ how many shillings have I thrown away.”

One of the novices was the heiress to great wealth gained in trade, and it was interesting to see the artless satisfaction she evinced when the final sentence being passed by the reverend mother, that only four of the “ beggars ” should

share the shilling with sister Mary Lucy, she was allowed to retain her promised two-pence.

As soon as this affair was settled, Geraldine requested to have the question solved, which for her still remained an enigma, of sister Placida, and the umbrella: for she had been so much occupied by her own allotted employment, as not to have remembered anything else, during the time they were together in the hospital.

After much laughter, and an endeavour, on the part of the experienced, to puzzle our heroine still more, sister Placida was called upon to explain the difficulty, which, like many others, admitted of the simplest solution.

"Indeed, reverend mother," said sister Placida, "the umbrella is a great comfort to lean on, when standing so many hours, for at the hospital and infirmary, there are neither chairs nor stools."

"How did you manage, sister Mary Paula?" asked one of the novices.

"I either knelt," replied our heroine, "or sat on the edge of the bed, next to the one whereon was the object of my care. May I continue to do so, reverend mother?"

"You may," replied the superioress, "should the bed be vacant."

At this instant, a previous ring at the back gate of the convent was explained, by the entrance of two lay sisters, with a large bale of goods for the

poor, sent to the sisters of mercy for distribution ; and this welcome present being the first of a succession of contributions in money and in goods, which arrived from all parts of the city, from Protestants as well as from Catholics, as the cold season advanced, sister Mary Lucy was enabled to fulfil all her promises, and to make many more to her old men and women, whether cross or resigned.

CHAPTER XIX.

Come while the blossoms of thy years are brightest,
Thou youthful wanderer in a flowery maze,
Come while the restless heart is bounding lightest,
And joy's pure sunbeams dazzle on thy ways.
Life has but shadows, save a promise given,
Which lights the future with a fadeless day ;
O touch the sceptre, win a hope in heaven,
Come, turn thy spirit from the world away.

Convent Invitation.

THE following day, as two of the sisters were returning from their round of visits, at the corner of the street which led to the convent, they were timidly accosted by a young person, who entreated them to listen to her. The sisters motioned to her to follow them, but this she seemed unwilling to do, till, after some instants' thought, she again took courage, and overtook them just as the convent door was opened by the portress.

"Perhaps it is to our 'House of Mercy,' you want admittance, my dear?" said the sister, "the door is round the corner."

"No, ma'am," replied she, "I am not come on my own account, but at the request of my lady ;"

and she presented a note addressed to the ‘Sisters of Mercy.’ The young person was now requested to sit down, and the note being taken to the mother-superior, proved as follows:—“I know that your first duty is towards the poor; but in dwelling on your name, I feel that if indeed you be sisters of mercy, the writer of this may well claim your care, being poor and wretched in the sight of heaven. I am told that you visit nowhere, without a note from one of the priests. I know none of the priests of this city; but the confidential bearer of this has seen unexpectedly to-day an English priest, to whom I was once known. If you can find out the residence of the Rev. John Bernard, and mention to him my maiden name of Helena Brook, he will bid you come to me for mercy’s sake.”

“Return to the young person,” said the mother-superior, to sister Agatha, “and tell her that the Rev. Mr. Bernard shall be written to this evening, and that, with his sanction, two of the sisters will wait on her lady to-morrow. Fix the hour with the young person, and the precise address.”

The Rev. Mr. Bernard answered the mother-superior’s note in person, and on the following afternoon, the two sisters appointed, namely sister Margaret, and our novice, Mary Paula, arrived at the place of their destination, which proved to be one of the handsomest houses in ——. The young attendant was watching for them at one of the win-

dows looking on the portico, and she admitted them softly into the entrance hall. The porter was, or feigned to be, asleep in his official chair, and no other male domestic appeared, as they followed their guide up two flights of stairs, to the front room of the second floor, which was fitted up in a style, which, in elegance and splendour, Geraldine had never seen surpassed, and which filled sister Margaret with pity and sorrow. "This reminds me," said the latter, as they were now left alone, "of what the apartments of Magdalen must have been, before her conversion. Rev. mother, however, has told us we may expect to find a true penitent, and may the Almighty's peace be with her."

Our heroine smiled at sister Margaret's ideas respecting the decoration of the apartments; and having but a few months left the same assemblage of marbles, fresco walls, classical groups in alabaster and bronze, and the choicest ornamental specimens of mosaics, cameos, and lava, she thought, "how innocently might all these rare beauties have been collected;" and feeling quite at home amongst them all, she turned to view the whole, when in a full-length mirror artfully disposed within a painted archway of trelliced work and flowers, our heroine for the first time beheld herself in the religious garb. "Oh! Geraldine! what sympathy have you, now, with works of art

opposed to the service of the altar? what are the false beauties of mythology, to one who has entered the court of the King of Kings, who has chosen to be an abject in the house of her Lord Jesus Christ !”

She remained fixedly gazing, while compunction filled her heart ; the touching aspirations attached to each part of her consecrated habit rushed to her mind, and, sinking on her knees, she offered anew the whole of her being, with all her faculties and sensibilities, to her only true Joy. Sister Margaret, who, during the absence of the attendant, had remained with her eyes fixed on the carpet, now touched Geraldine on the arm, to give notice that they were sent for ; and they followed the young person into the adjoining room, which was nearly similar in size and decoration. A bed with ormolu canopy, and curtains of amber silk, stood in the centre, towards which sister Margaret was approaching, when the attendant conducted them to the inner side of the room, where they found the object of their visit. She had insisted on being taken out of bed, and laid on a mattress on the floor, before the admission of the sisters : her long auburn hair had been hastily cut, and lay beside her, and her clasped hands concealed her face. The sisters knelt on each side of the sufferer, and the attendant left the room.

“ Are the Sisters of Mercy alone with me ?” at length said Lady Hartley.

“ They are, my dear,” said sister Margaret.

“ My dear !” repeated Lady Hartley ; and, uncovering her face, she smiled. It was a young and lovely face ; yet, when the smile had passed, there appeared the traces of acute suffering. She gazed at each alternately. “ Oh ! you are really nuns,” cried she ; and then the tears rushing to her eyes, she threw her arms round sister Margaret’s neck, and sobbed aloud ; while sister Margaret, in a gentle voice, spoke peace and encouragement.

Suddenly Lady Hartley raised her head, and looked earnestly at her. “ No ! it cannot be ! yet there is a likeness ; and the voice—the accent—you surely are not Irish ?”

“ I am not,” replied sister Margaret ; “ I am Scotch.”

“ Ah ! speak on ! speak on !” said Lady Hartley, laying her hand again on sister Margaret’s shoulder ; “ those were happy days, when I listened to pious advice given in that tongue.”

“ And you will have happy days again, please God,” said sister Margaret.

“ Ah ! no ! you do not know all ! How can I ever tell you all I have to say ?”

“ But you shall not be pressed to tell us anything you do not like,” said sister Margaret. “ It does not belong to us to hear your confession, my poor child.”

“ But I wish to tell you all, or nearly all,” said

she, "for my heart is bursting; that was the reason I begged you to come to me: and the very sight of your coif has given me courage beyond my hopes."

"And, more than this," said sister Margaret, "Almighty God has graciously sent his strengthening grace, in token of having accepted the penitential spirit in which you now humble yourself in the sight of his poor servants."

"Oh! these are comforting words," said Lady Hartley, as sister Margaret replaced her on her pillow; "yet, when you are gone, I shall be as wretched as ever."

"No, you will not," replied the sister; "you will then continue to open your heart with simplicity and gratitude to the mercy of God."

Lady Hartley had continued to hold the hand of each sister; and she now said to sister Margaret, "I feel a ring on your finger, and by that token I know that you are professed. There is some motto engraved on it—what are the words?"

Sister Margaret replied—"It is the verse in abridgment of 'In all things I sought rest, and I shall abide in the inheritance of the Lord.'"

"In all things I, too, have sought rest," repeated Lady Hartley; "but, wretched creature that I am, I did not abide in the inheritance of the Lord. Listen now, dear sisters—I will tell you—yes! I have worn the religious garb—I have

lain prostrate before the altar, and here I am, a broken-hearted cast-away! Oh! Sisters—Sisters of Mercy! have mercy on the victim of a lost vocation!”

Deeply affected, the sisters pressed the trembling hands they held, and sister Margaret replied—“ May our Almighty and merciful God receive your tears ; may He pardon you, and give you peace !”

“ Alas !” cried Lady Hartley ; “ God never designed me for the world I have so blindly chosen ; for I have not had strength of mind to keep the right path through the labyrinth of pleasure.”

“ There is no such path,” observed sister Margaret.

“ Ah ! but there are many who have kept themselves from evil tongues and false hearts, while I have loved and trusted every one, and have been led, as if in a dream, to throw away the little happiness I once possessed, and there is nothing left for my heart but to break.”

“ Ah, no ! your poor heart shall not break, please God,” said sister Margaret, “ with earthly sorrow, but with contrition ; and in that sense you know it is said, ‘ the broken and humble heart God will not despise.’ ”

“ He must despise and reject mine,” said Lady Hartley, despondingly, “ for I have wilfully turned it from Him to his enemies. Yes ! wilfully—for I

knew my Lord's will, and did it not. I had reposed in the sweet refreshing shade of his enclosed garden, and left it for the glare and scorching heat of the plains. An accident drew me from the convent; and, once again in the world, I remained for the scandal of others, and the loss of my own soul."

"Mistrust not thus the tender mercy of your God," said sister Margaret; "are you not as the stray lamb, which the Divine Shepherd bears gently back to his fold? Are not the angels rejoicing at this very hour in your repentance?"

"Your voice soothes me," said Lady Hartley, "and your blessed assurances revive for a few instants the feeling of devotion, but it lasts not: the elastic spring of hope is gone for ever; and in its place, a heavy immoveable weight of mingled guilt and pain weighs down my spirit. I can no longer love God as once I loved him. Gone! gone! innocence and joy, and peace, and hope, and faith, and love, all gone. Ah! do not speak to me," continued she, hurriedly, as sister Margaret bent over with fresh motives for comfort. "Let me first tell you—first show you something"—and she drew from beneath the pillow a thin silver case; it contained a letter, which, by its appearance, had been often opened and re-opened, and watered by the tears of its possessor. "Look at the address," said she, with nervous rapidity, "Look! it is to Helena Brook, but I never received this letter till all

was over; and when I did receive it, I was afraid to open it, and I never broke the seal till I began to pine after my lost happiness; when my heart had begun to lose drop by drop all its warm blood, and to dwell with bitterness; when my husband called me a fool, and cursed the day he saw me; when, reproaching me for that to which he had led me, he had the cruelty to say, that ‘a runaway nun’ had indeed better hide herself:’ then I sank, both mind and body. They tell me that he was kind to me after this, but I knew it not, and was many weeks a mother before I saw my precious baby. She was beautiful. I would look for hours in her clear blue eyes—I offered her up from this her earliest infancy to become the spouse of Jesus Christ—I put her under the special protection of his Blessed Mother—nothing coloured has ever touched her, and she has looked like a seraph in her spotless white. I have had other poor infants since, but they all died, either before, or directly after their birth; and she, my chosen one, that was to plead to God for me, to atone for my infidelity—to rejoice my soul, and give new life within me, she—Oh! my God, my God, she is an idiot!”*

A deep groan burst from Geraldine, her sympathy was too intense for utterance.

“Do not attempt to comfort me,” said Lady

* Taken from life.

Hartley, to sister Margaret, “but read this letter; I could repeat it to you, but, that often as it has been read, it fills me with the same emotion, as if six days, instead of six years, had passed since it was written, and you remind me so forcibly of the revered writer, that I must listen to it from your lips. Why do you hesitate? Why does your face flush?”

“It has passed,” said sister Margaret; and taking the letter, she read as follows:—

“C—— Convent, May 10, 183 .

“My dear child,—“We have been anxiously expecting to hear that your return to us will not be again delayed, but that you will join us before the clothing of our two postulants; that our dear Mary Agnes may not lose her rank amongst our novices. I have your first letter by my side, in which you pine after your convent duties and pleasures, and part of it I will transcribe as the touch-stone of your present feelings. ‘My uncle and aunt are very kind to me; so are all their friends and the servants, particularly the maid who waits on me till my sprain is cured. The house is beautiful, and full of pictures and statues, and every one seems to be smiling and talking all day long. I may do just as I like, but it is very strange that I am melancholy, with all this to make me happy. I believe it must be, that no one understands me, and I understand no one. I do not care for any-

thing that is talked about, and when recreation time comes (for I keep to our convent hours as much as possible) I am more inclined to cry than to laugh. You will say, that this is having very little courage, my dear mistress, but it does seem so very long to be absent from you and my religious sisters, and, above all, I feel the desolation of being no longer under the same roof with the adorable sacrament.' My dear child, I trust that you will soon re-assure my heart by a letter more in harmony with this sentiment than was your last, and will tell me that the day is fixed for your return to the holy happy life you were so grieved to leave. Come back to your once happy nest, my poor simple bird; you are not formed for the world. You will only flutter and die in its baneful atmosphere. The very qualities which in the cloister would be nurtured without peril, would in the world prove your ruin. That flexible disposition, that soft confiding character, which, like wax, can be moulded according to the will of others, and which is the perfection of a religious, would in the world prove an imperfection, and expose you to perpetual vacillation and inconstancy of conduct, if not to actual transgression. Those talents,—above all, that decorative taste which has hitherto been sanctified by its dedication to the altar,—would in the world be turned to vanity, luxury and self-adornment." The writer then relates many

little anecdotes of the noviceship, and conveys messages from its inmates, all indicative of the artless merriment as well as the piety of the novices, and thus continues: "Ah! Mary Agnes, when is it that the heart is thus light? Is it not, when having generously followed the call to the rough and narrow way, every flower is full of fragrance, every sunbeam full of joy. Return, then, and renew the joyous laugh which has so often made the noviceship ring, and was the true recreation of a heart at peace with God. Return, with your wonted zeal and enthusiasm to adorn the new altar in honour of St. Joseph, which mother-abbess wishes to be fixed in the south dormitory, the care of which is to be given to *us*."

Under a fresh date, the letter is continued thus:

"My unhappy child!—How can I give utterance to the pang which your letter of this morning has given us, and which I perceive is blotted by your tears. Oh! fly from the snare which besets you—flight is your only safety, my poor, weak, if not guilty child. Alas! there is one place in the choir, towards which my heart has inexpressibly yearned; my hopes have hitherto filled it with the virgin form of my regained treasure. Eleven white veils are there before me; beyond them is the altar—the tabernacle—the divinity contained in the adorable Host. Eleven; and the twelfth is gone: and why?

is it to betray her Lord? Are the thirty pieces of silver included in these earthly espousals? I can write no more, but you will be remembered by all, in the holy sacrifice and communion, until we hear again.

MARY AGATHA, of the Cross.
Benedictine unworthy."

A deep pause succeeded the reading of this letter; and then a shriek, wild, piercing, and unearthly, burst from the hapless being to whom it had been addressed. Sister Margaret bent over her, and whispered unheeded consolation; at length Lady Hartley opened her eyes, and said, "I was called by Jesus Christ to the high privilege of being his spouse. Before his altar, in presence of the adorable sacrament of his love, I begged of his minister the holy habit of religion, and in my name was said; 'The kingdom of this world and all the grandeur of the earth I despise, for the love of our Lord Jesus Christ, whom I have seen, whom I have loved, in whom I have believed, and towards whom my heart inclineth.' Ah! go, go,—leave me,—why did I send for you? Why did you come? No one can bring me help or comfort. I have left my God, and He now leaves me. Do not speak to me,—go, blessed women, go!—I beg, I entreat. What have I to do with you, or you with me,—leave me! leave me!"

"Hush," said sister Margaret, in a voice which

though gentle, was full of authority ; “ hush these emotions, and listen calmly, while in your name I say, ‘ O Jesus, for thy tender mercies’ sake, and for thy bitter passion’s sake, forgive and forget what I have been. Pity ! oh pity ! what I am,— satisfy for what I deserve, and supply what I desire. O dearest Saviour ! thou soughtest me when I fled from thee ; wilt thou reject me now that I seek thee ? ”

Again did Lady Hartley throw her arms round sister Margaret’s neck, and weep. “ Ah ! cried she, “ repeat to me again that prayer.” The sister did so, adding, “ Who gave you the thought to send for us ? Was this not a sign that your blessed Saviour has sought you, and that on your seeking him, he will not ‘ reject’ you ? Ah ! listen to His loving invitations, and not to the whisperings of the wily enemy, whose object is to dishearten you.”

“ But it is very disheartening,” said Lady Hartley, “ that God gives so much more grace to some persons than to others. I wonder why He did not give me sufficient to persevere in my vocation ? ”

“ Had you been faithful to the degree of grace then vouchsafed you,” said sister Margaret, “ God would have bestowed more ; but how can we dare to hope for a superabundant degree, to supply for our infidelity ? ”

“But,” replied Lady Hartley, “of course He foreknew all that would happen to me, and therefore it was very cruel.”

“You must reject those thoughts instantly,” said sister Margaret. “The human mind is so limited, that when we would dive into the permission of evil, in the eternal counsels, we are lost. The wisest philosophers, the most profound divines, have been content to admire, in reverence and humility, the Almighty’s decrees, to respect them with love, and to love them with respect, as impenetrable, incomprehensible. But this we do know, that He can bring good out of evil.”

“Ah! I know very well,” interrupted Lady Hartley, “that all must conduce to the honour and glory of God. Unfortunately, as I may say, I know my religion perfectly well. I know that He will, in the end, be as much glorified by my sinful life, as He would have been, had I advanced in perfection, for we cannot do Him either harm or good, and He knows how to over-rule evil for good; but that does not console me for having been permitted, from want of His grace, to fall by degrees, till now I must be a warning for every one, instead of an example, and must be content to know that every silly girl will be told the sad life, and pious end, of the unfortunate Lady Hartley.”

“If they can with truth be told of your pious end,” said sister Margaret, “it will make ample

amends for any disedification you may have given them."

"But I do not wish to play the part of Magdalene," said Lady Hartley, the proud tears gushing from her eyes; "I did feel penitent when I sent for you, but now it is all gone, and while you were talking to me just now, and thinking me so humble and contrite, I was planning how I could have my beautiful hair made up into tresses, that would fix again on my head."

"And are you hoping to be at once free from distraction and temptation," said sister Margaret, "and to find no difficulty in returning to the narrow road? surely you will be more courageous. I should wish to leave you in more peace, and yet we cannot linger with you longer, than to allow me to say one more short and earnest prayer."

"Say that beautiful little one again," cried she, "I have it nearly by heart."

Sister Margaret did so, and although she could not reckon on the duration of Lady Hartley's feelings, yet it was consoling to see this ingenuous though vacillating creature once more in peace; and having with some difficulty obtained her promise that she would prepare for confession, they took their leave for that day, followed by her blessings.

"We are now going not to teach, but to be taught," whispered sister Margaret, when having

quitted the lordly mansions of the great, they turned into one of their oft-trod alleys, and climbed up the stairs of a wretched tenement. On entering the room of the bed-ridden woman to whom sister Margaret referred, the former gave an exclamation of joy at seeing them.

“ Ah ! glory be to God. Alagh,* you are come, alagh !”

“ How are you, Norry ?”

“ Very ill, alagh ; glory be to God, who sends me what is best for me.”

“ Are you in pain, Norry ?”

“ I am, alagh. My sweet Jesus and his blessed mother comfort me. Praise be to him, for sending you to me this blessed day.”

“ Do you know, Norry, that Friday will be a great feast, the feast of St. Francis ?”

“ Will it, alagh ? Ah ! glorious are the saints of God, and very glorious is the saint who received the marks of the precious wounds of his loving Saviour. His prayers must be always heard, alagh !”

“ You can repeat many verses about St. Francis receiving the stigmas, can you not, Norry ? But you are very faint. Where is the pain ?”

“ Oh the heart,—the heart,—oh the heart, it is going entirely.” Here she nearly fainted, but after awhile revived, saying, “ O sweet Jesus, thy heart was pierced with a lance ; glory be to thee

* Child.

for letting me share some of thy pain. O the heart !”

“Almighty God gives you abundant grace, and you are faithful to it, Norry. It is therefore a sweet consolation to see you on your dying bed, soon to be with him whom your heart desires.”

“I have not been faithful enough, alagh ! but I trust he will receive me, and receive you, and receive all the faithful departed,—‘eternal rest give to them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them, and may all be with him, and his blessed mother, and all his saints for ever. Amen.’ ”

“Were you able to go to confession and holy communion, the day you expected, Norry ?”

“I was, glory be to my sweet Jesus, who is the bread of life.”

“Do you sleep better than you did, Norry ?”

“I do not, alagh. I cannot sleep at night. I am forced to think of his watching and agony in the garden, not to be complaining when I hear all the rest asleep through the night.”

“And when you think of his sufferings, it seems very little you are bearing for him, does it not ?”

“It does seem very little, alagh ! And by uniting my pain and weariness to his, I am having my purgatory, which comforts me, for I may hope to be the sooner with him.”

“And you have many calm and silent hours

with him in the night, which you could not have by day, Norry."

"I have, alagh ! I say my prayers and my rosary often in the night ; but sometimes the head, the head, alagh, it aches, oh it aches ! I can only think of his crown of thorns, and bear it for his sake, for then I cannot pray."

"And indeed you know, far better than I can tell you, Norry, that God would rather have that offering, than the longest prayers you could say. Do the Christian Brothers come to see you ?"

"They do, thanks be to God, and to his blessed mother, and may the Christian Brothers receive the reward of their charity."

"We have brought you a wrapper, Norry, and some tea and sugar, and some of the sisters will call at the end of the week."

The next event of interest at this time, was the arrival of several sisters of the parent convent, on their way to —, where they were to establish a new foundation. They were headed by their venerable mother-superior, whom, as foundress of the order, our heroine had alone wished to see and know among the dwellers on earth, and in whom she found all her expectations realized. It was interesting to watch the greetings of those, who had once formed but one community, and still more interesting to behold their parting ; some amongst them struggling to retain the freedom of heart once acquired.

On the evening of the departure of the sister guests, sister Margaret, whose warm heart had shared in the passing emotion of the visit, was called from the recreation to the room appropriated to the evening instruction of adults, and found two young persons closely enveloped in cloaks; one of them especially, presenting an appearance so unlike the general visitors at that hour, that sister Margaret concluded there was some wish for concealment, and led them into an adjoining little parlour, where, throwing aside her veil and hood, Lady Hartley seized the hand of the sister, and exclaimed,—“I am come to give you good news; I am resolved to go to confession, and to serve God in humble penance all the rest of my life: my faithful maid and friend wishes to be with me wherever I go: we have talked over a thousand plans—amongst them, to board at a convent. I should much prefer returning to my own dear convent at ——, where, ill as I have acted, they would receive me; and where one heart, I know, has never totally renounced me,—I mean my former dear mistress, mother Agatha.”

“She does not cease to pray for you,” replied sister Margaret, “but it is not on this earth; mother Agatha Gordon died three years ago.”

“Died!” exclaimed Lady Hartley,—“she is dead!—you can have the cruelty to tell me this with that calm voice, when she was my friend.”

“And to me,” said sister Margaret, “not only a friend, but, by nature and religion, a sister.”

“Your sister !” echoed Lady Hartley.

“She was my twin-sister,” said the religious, and was silent.

“But why do I feel more than you ?” cried Lady Hartley, with a vehemence of remorse and sorrow, “but because your thoughts are constantly turned to that ‘better land, where you are to meet, and never—never hear the word farewell ;’ while I am tossed on this wicked world with every chance of shipwreck.”

“Chance !” said sister Margaret, “you have been too well taught to use that word. Almighty God has sent you many graces, and you have been unfaithful to them ; this only should cause sorrow. Still, in his mercy, He again invites you ; and all these favours are the more precious, because so unmerited. You are very right to think of the shelter of a convent, and of that convent in particular which nurtured you.”

“But she is dead,” said Lady Hartley, “who would have won me back to holiness and peace,—but you will correct me, I know, for indulging these human feelings; and, indeed, had she lived, how could I, a mere boarder, expect to be with her as once I was ;—this might have fretted me. No ! I will endeavour to rise above these fond regrets, and will write to the present Lady Abbess,

whoever she may be, and will show you my letter before it is sent. I trust no other plans will come into my head."

"Should they do so, you must banish them as temptations," said sister Margaret; "supposing that your confessor's advice be given, as you expect it will, for this arrangement."

"So I will, if possible," returned Lady Hartley; "but still, if God does not send me sufficient grace, I cannot follow this plan, or do right in any way."

"Very true," replied sister Margaret; "but remember, you must be faithful to the good inspirations He has now given you, and doubt not but that more grace will be granted you. God grants salvation to all those who contribute their own consent to the graces and favours He has prepared for them, and which He also offers and distributes; and to those who accept the graces of penitence, faith, hope, and charity, He also gives the grace of final perseverance, and the glorious happiness of His eternal love."

"I often wonder," said Lady Hartley, sighing, "at the change in me from what I once was."

"The sole cause of the decay and slackening of piety," returned sister Margaret, "is in the creature's own will; God never abandons those whom He has once justified, unless they first abandon Him."

"But perhaps He never justified me."

“How can any baptized person say this,” said sister Margaret; “were you not then restored to original justice, forfeited by our first parents?”

“Oh!” cried Lady Hartley, “if you are going back to my baptism, I cannot contradict you, of course; but I mean since then.”

“What do you mean by ‘since then?’” said sister Margaret; “when we fall from our renewed innocence, has not God graciously given us the means of regaining His favour in the tribunal of penance? and if you have not availed yourself of the means of reconciliation, on yourself rests all the responsibility. Humble yourself, then, for not having consented to the mercy of God. Our free will can accept or reject His free grace, and you have done the latter.”

“But I will do so no more,” exclaimed Lady Hartley; “I will finish my preparations for confession, and go to Father ——, without delay. Indeed, I should be quite afraid of seeing you again, until I had given you some proof of my sincerity. I will also write to the Lady Abbess. I will do all I can to merit the return of the grace I have rejected.”

And with these resolutions, Lady Hartley departed. The following week she returned, radiant with joy. She had made a general confession—she had the full approval of her confessor to retire to her former convent—she bore in her hand a

guarded, but kind reply from the Lady Abbess of the convent, who was the same she had known when a novice, inviting her to visit the convent previously to forming any plan for a longer residence ; and, better than all, she had seen a reverend friend of Sir Thaddeus Hartley, who had given her every hope, that if she continued for some little time in a pious retirement, a reconciliation might be effected, as her husband was willing to believe that she had been guilty only of indiscretion. She told sister Margaret, that were it not for her maid's sake, who wished to take leave of her family, she would begin her journey on the following day.

It was about three weeks after this encouraging interview, that sister Margaret received, through her reverend mother, a letter from Lady Hartley, dated "Hôtel de Rivoli, Paris;" stating, that a few days after her visit to the Convent of Mercy, an aunt of her husband had arrived ; that as this was the first overture from that part of the family, she could not but receive her guest with respect : that Mrs. ——— was then on her way to Naples ; and in order to convince the world that Lady Hartley had been misjudged, generously offered to introduce her anew into society ; also holding out to her the prospect of a reconciliation with her husband ; and that they were [merely resting in the French capital for a few days longer.

It would not enter into the limits, or intention, of this volume, to pursue farther the career of Lady Hartley. Suffice it to say, that her husband, who had originally sought her for her innocent piety, and who would, doubtless, again have sought her in the retirement to which her repentance had nearly led her—refused any overture made through his gay relation, from the circles his wife had chosen; and years dragged on, with this victim of an inconstant purpose, who, in rejecting the grace of penance, as she had done that of a vocation, lost by degrees the remembrance even of the pure and happy feelings given to the faithful soul; and in the false and deadly pleasures of the world, proved that awful sentence, “My spirit shall not always strive with man.”

CHAPTER XX.

Home of the virtuous, when in peace reposing,
The spirit dwells in scenes of cloudless bliss ;
Where life's sad anxious cares are daily closing,—
Who would not early choose a lot like this ?

AMONGST her numerous sister-novices, Geraldine found exemplified the effects of the admirable instructions they received from the spiritual lectures and exhortations of mother Juliana. In one she observed the spirit of mortification most evidenced by her silence when reproved,—a silence, not of sullenness, but of modesty and humility ; and this on seemingly trifling occasions, when, had she not been habitually recollected on that point, she would have been thrown off her guard. In another, she remarked a still greater advance in humility ; which led her, whenever she had from carelessness deserved reproof, to own her fault with sorrow, and resume her cheerfulness, just as a simple affectionate child would do, whose mother had forgiven it : and those examples were the more interesting and instructive, as they were given, not by two young creatures habituated to

the restraints of their age, but by ladies who had lived some time in the world, and were mistresses of their time and actions. In all the novices, was marked the endeavour to guard those doors by which the interior life is molested; no one relating, or willingly hearing, news of the world she had left; and no one being occupied with any soul but her own; each being responsible, under God, to her mistress alone; and bound to give each other the edification only of silent example. Thus, in holy silence and peace, each soul was hidden with Christ; or, as it is of novices we spoke, it was her prayer and aim to be thus hidden: for, as during the noviciate the greatest warfare takes place between nature and grace, so must there be in the novice far more variation of feeling observable than amongst the professed sisters, whose calm seemed imperturbable. Geraldine, however, whose interest in watching the varied operations of Divine grace on different characters, was increased, by seeing in the professed sisters the result to which the same system led the most contrasted dispositions, found the natural faults of the novices as interesting as their good qualities. Our heroine was too much experienced to imagine that all warfare between nature and grace had ceased in the breasts of the professed sisters, but grace had gained the vantage-ground, and the attacks of the enemy were always

repulsed. The sensibilities and little artifices of self-love—the desire that the poor should recognize, and feel grateful, to one's individual self—the wish to relate with credit to one's self, at the recreation, some interesting scene—chagrin at being no longer sent to the places where one had become so useful, and so popular,—all this had passed; for the true spouse of Christ had long realized the truth, that “all that is not God is nothing!” and insensible to the popular voice of praise or blame, to the gratitude or ingratitude of the object relieved, to the interior satisfaction or difficulty experienced in the path of duty, walks simply with her God, disregarding everything that would lift the idol self on the altar raised in her heart to Him alone.

The community in which Geraldine was now placed was so numerous, and she was necessarily thrown so much more with the novices than with the professed sisters, that it was some time before she had distinguished the characteristics of more than three or four of the latter.

Sister Margaret she had directly loved, for her Scotch accent; and had marked, on several occasions, her national firmness of mind, and her still but deep religious affections. Sister Mary Lucy was soon investigated. Sister Placida and sister Josephine had amply repaid, in their well-regulated minds and hearts, every advance made

towards a more intimate knowledge of their characters. Wherever our heroine turned, she met a mild, modest countenance; in some, great personal attractions, and in all the recollected religious look, which, in the consecrated spouse of Heaven, is the only true beauty. Amongst this sweet sisterhood there was but one striking exception, in a certain sister Ignatia, who seemed as if, like the scape-goat, she were destined to bear the sins of the whole community, and to be sent forth into the desert; not from any want of Christian love and compassion towards an object so inferior and afflicted, but from an aversion or incapacity on her own part to be blended in the harmony around her. This incapacity was certainly great, if not total, for sister Ignatia was very deaf, and subject to a nervous irritation and spasm, which made it almost an act of cruelty to address her: and Geraldine, who had occasionally attempted it, was additionally discouraged by the tones of her voice, which were harsh, abrupt, and incoherent; while she could learn nothing from her countenance, from which nature or malady had banished all expression beyond that of nervous terror. Our heroine, however, while pondering on the seeming inequality of God's gifts, continued to watch sister Ignatia with kind interest, doubting not to discover in time some glimpse of an interior, where rich indemnification would be found for external

trial ; “ For,” thought she, “ this sister surely accepts her outward afflictions as intended to fence her within the hidden life, in which is found the only true happiness.” But in vain did Geraldine endeavour to discover this interior ; the outworks were inaccessible ; therefore her interest at length subsided into the willing hope, that this sister was a loving bearer of her cross ; a hope which was the more fervent, from the contrast presented in sister Mary Gabrielle, her cousin, who had entered the convent as postulant at the same time with sister Ignatia, and had been clothed, and professed with her.

Sister Gabrielle in her white veil had looked like a seraph ; and now that six years had seen her in the holy badge of her vows, if she were less brilliant she was not the less lovely. Her countenance bore the same open innocent look which was so engaging in sister Mary Lucy, but the expression was of a higher order of intellect, and the affectionate playfulness of her manner was the unbending of a superior mind. The bountiful giver of all things had endowed her with a rare facility in acquirement, and she gratefully acknowledged the Almighty donor in every rich and varied gift. At the time of Geraldine’s arrival, sister Mary Gabrielle was sacristan, and our heroine, from her place in the choir, was often an unseen and sympathising witness of the holy joy and emotion

which filled her heart when occupied in the care of the chapel and altar. Sister Gabrielle was also the organist, and regulator of the choir, which was admirably arranged: she gave the vocal instructions to the novices, and when any one was deputed to take the instrumental part, she led the voices with a pathos and devotion, which drew the ready tears to the eyes of Geraldine. Nor was it only within the walls of the enclosure that sister Gabrielle was the joy of her community: her labours amongst the poor, whether in the public institutions, in the private dwellings, in the school, or House of Mercy, were subjects of wonder and edification, even amongst the devoted sisterhood around her: and the simplicity with which the most painful and heroic acts of mercy and charity were performed, forbade the suspicion that in these good works self-love was suffered to bear sway.

Geraldine had been desired one evening by the mother-superior to go to her room immediately after matins, and to remain behind the high screen until she should join her. These little invitations were always acceptable to Geraldine, and keeping from the draughts of air exactly as she had been directed, she seated herself, and had not waited many minutes before the door opened, and she heard the whispered voice of the mother-superior, accompanied by that of sister Gabrielle.

“ Ah, dearest sister,” said the former, “ you well know how I love you ; be satisfied without these tender assurances ; we are not two little novices, who must pet and be petted.”

“ You are allowed, as my mother, nay, you are obliged to love me,” said sister Gabrielle, “ for am I not your own dear child ?”

“ You are my own dear, precious child, and sister, and friend. There, now go.”

“ Give me your blessing ?”

“ Ah, I am always blessing you, and praying for you, when I had far better be praying for my poor self.”

“ But you must bless me now, dear reverend mother.”

“ Almighty God bless you now and for ever,” at length said the mother-superior, and the friends parted, sister Gabrielle descending to her duties in the sacristy, and the mother-superior entering within the screen, perceived our heroine, whom she had forgotten.

“ I have coughed, and moved your chair, and given all honourable notice that I was here, reverend mother,” said Geraldine, “ but I am happy that you forgot me. I love to listen to friendship such as your’s.”

“ We pray and make every effort that our friendship may be purely in and for God,” said

the mother-superior; "and I do not fear for sister Gabrielle, but I do fear my own weak heart, so apt to love the creature apart from the Creator."

"Indeed, reverend mother," said Geraldine, "I should judge otherwise, for sister Mary Gabrielle permits herself many more demonstrations of affection than you do."

"But so long as I shall hold my present office," said the mother-superior, "she may lawfully do so, for it is to the superior she gives her love and confidence as a dutiful child."

"And may you not equally love this dutiful child?"

"I may, nay, I must; but I must equally love all my children; and, in truth, I do love them all, and am permitted, as their mother in religion, to express this affection more than if I were simply one of the sisters. Still I make no distinctions, and I desire to feel none, and pray that I may love God alone, directly, and all creatures indirectly, through Him. This is not to be effected without constant prayer."

"To me," said Geraldine, "your friendship is so edifying, that I grieve it should cost your heart a pang. I well know that in the religious life particular friendships are not permitted; but this is to be understood as an exclusive attachment, that

would endanger charity and sisterly union with the rest of the community: now I have watched you at recreation, and have never seen you attach yourself to any one in particular. You make yourself universal; and I think no one could discover whether sister Gabrielle or sister Ignatia were the chosen friend."

"Poor sister Ignatia!" said the mother-superior; "her sufferings have continued through life only to increase, and she bears them like a saint. She was to have brought a considerable portion with her to the convent, and was at length indebted to sister Mary Gabrielle, her distant cousin, for admittance as a choir sister. She was then possessed of several very useful acquirements; had a pleasing person, with but little of the nervous affection now so habitual; was remarkably quick and clever in every office assigned her; and in five years has become the distressing object you behold! Never has a murmur passed her lips, though the interior conflicts she has undergone have been a martyrdom. You see her now, apparently cold and insensible: she was once a volcano beneath the snows! but, thank God, the victory is hers. You have taken an interest in her, sister Mary Paula, which has not escaped me."

"I am just considering," said Geraldine, "in which the grace of God is the most manifested, and

Himself the most glorified : whether by the patient suffering of sister Ignatia, or by the rich and abundant gifts of sister Gabrielle? Without doubt I should pronounce in favour of the former, were there a shade of self-complacency discoverable in the latter ; but it is, indeed, a lovely sight, to behold sister Gabrielle, as a little child in humility and confiding affection, in the midst of her sisters. Her own heart incapable of jealousy, she never imagines that such a feeling can exist in that of others."

" Nor does it exist, thanks' be to God, in our community," said the mother-superior. " All we receive from our bountiful Giver is for the sisterhood. She who brings much, and she who brings little, having a willing heart, are equally accepted; for that which in temporal goods is regulated by the vow of poverty, is in spiritual and intellectual gifts equally regulated by the heart's desire of humility."

The bell now rang for supper ; and Geraldine followed to the choir, and thence to the refectory, trying to banish as a distraction her comparison of the two religious sisters, who had formed the subject of her conversation. She continued to meditate, however, on these two states of spiritual prosperity and adversity, for it was in that light the principally viewed them ; and at length de-

cided, after some days of observation and deliberation, that the grace of God being the most conspicuous in the lovely humility of sister Gabrielle, He must thereby receive the most glory, and the sisters the most edification. Yet she could not but think that the most glorious reward was prepared for her who had shared the most in the sufferings of her Divine Spouse. "Sister Gabrielle," thought she, "through His grace, dies to the world; but sister Ignatia is crucified to it."

CHAPTER XXI.

Weep not for the saints who ascend
To partake of the joys of the sky;
Weep not for the seraphs, who bend
With the worshipping chorus on high;
Weep not for the spirits, now crown'd
With the garland to martyrdom given;—
Oh! weep not for them—they have found
Their reward and their refuge in Heaven!

The Sacred Harp.

“ I CANNOT feel so perfectly at peace, reverend mother, as you exhort me ever to be,” said our heroine one afternoon, during recreation, when the former had taken her aside to give her a little remonstrance for over-grave looks. “ I am, thanks be to God, without interior or exterior trial; but I cannot disengage my heart from all sympathy with yours, and I see there is some unusual care pressing on it.”

“ Ah! do not watch me so closely,” said the mother-superior, smiling. “ Mere trifles can press upon an unfaithful heart.”

“ No,” said Geraldine, “ trifles have no power over you; and why will you not confide in me?”

Must I think, dear reverend mother, that you repent of the precious hours we have passed together, and wish me, when alone with you, to be as ceremoniously the 'novice' with her 'mother-superior,' as when with the community?"

"Never can I wish that," replied the mother-superior; "for it is I who must then feel the privileged person. Believe me, sister Mary Paula, I find comfort, real comfort, in the time we pass together; and I fear not to intrust to you, as you request it, the cause of my anxiety, or, as I ought to feel it, rather that of greater reliance on Divine Providence. A Sister of Mercy must not be so wanting in faith, as to be anxious. The same God who guards us when we leave the enclosure, and causes our safe return, will protect us when danger is within our walls; or, if he permit our mortal part to sink in His service, will mercifully receive our souls.—Two of the sisters have caught the fever."

"You mean the typhus fever?"

"I do. Sister Placida and sister Gabrielle are now in the infirmary; and the door which opens from that corridor into the dormitories, will be kept locked. Mother Juliana will give you all other instructions, as she will receive directions this evening."

"I trust, reverend mother, you will permit me to nurse the sisters," cried Geraldine, eagerly. "Let me intreat this favour of you."

“ If the infirmarian wishes for your services, sister Mary Paula, she will apply to your mistress,” replied the mother-superior.

“ I stand rebuked,” said our heroine. “ ‘ Desire nothing, refuse nothing !’ how easy has that appeared till now.”

They now returned to the rest of the community; but had not remained many minutes amongst the cheerful groups, when the five minutes’ warning rang before vespers. Instantly all dispersed, in search of work to be deposited on the long tables in the community room and noviceship, in readiness for the lecture immediately after complin; and Geraldine hastened with the rest to the duty of the hour.

At night prayers, the novice whose stall was behind hers, was missing. The following morning, at prime, mother Juliana led a young postulant from the choir to the infirmary; and before the evening, it was ascertained that six of the community, including sister Ignatia, had caught the malady. The two infirmarians, and a lay sister, with the mother-superior, were their constant and only assistants. Day after day Geraldine expected, in vain, to be sent for; and she found it difficult not to wish that she might have received the edification which she felt was given by the sick nuns and their tender nurses.

She had, however, the comfort to receive a pre-

cious little note from the mother-superior, giving good tidings of sister Placida and the young postulant: the others continued much as they had been the preceding day, with the exception of sister Gabrielle, who was worse; and the prayers of the community continued for her with increased fervour.

Three days and nights had now passed since the state of sister Mary Gabrielle had been pronounced alarming, then hopeless; and it was after the last choir office, on this third day, that Geraldine retired to her cell, hoping that she might at length receive a summons to the infirmary. She dwelt in pensive thought on the long and tender friendship which had subsisted between the dying nun and her mother-superior, untarnished by even a passing estrangement. The highly-gifted subject had loved the sweet vassalage of obedience; to her, for Jesus' sake, the yoke had been easy, and the burthen light; and to her youthful mother had she yielded, as unto Him. This unvarying conduct, while it edified the sisterhood, was received with simplicity by the mother-superior, as due to the office she held, and not to their previous friendship, which on both sides had been more and more purified from the mere sensible gratification of natural congeniality and affection, as each year saw them more disengaged from all that was not in God.

While Geraldine sate awaiting the hoped-for

summons from the infirmary, she heard an unusual passing and repassing along the dormitory ; but so softly did the sisters tread, that had not the pannel of her cell-door been open, she could not have heard them. At length the latch was lifted, and she opened the door to mother Juliana. She held on her arm Geraldine's white cloak, which she made a sign for her to put on, and gave her a taper, saying, " When you shall hear the first toll of the bell, sister Mary Paula, come to the noviceship, that you may light your taper, and arrange in time for the procession to the infirmary."

" Sister Mary Gabrielle is then dying?" whispered Geraldine.

" She is," replied mother Juliana ; " and is expecting to receive the holy Viaticum : " saying this, she passed on to the next cell ; and after a few minutes, the heavy swing and toll of the great bell gave the summons to the chamber of death.

Geraldine found the band of novices awaiting the signal for the procession to advance ; and, lighting her taper, she placed herself in the ranks. The professed and lay sisters now assembled at the end of the great corridor, and, immediately the latter had passed in order, the novices followed. Geraldine cast a glance along the row of professed sisters, as they stood to let the novices advance, and caught the heaven-born expression of her who walked the last in the procession. To the marble paleness

which had been the consequence of sorrow and fatigue, had now succeeded a deep flush ; and the aid she was beseeching from heaven shone in her uplifted eyes, and in the almost smile of her parted lips.

Arrived in the infirmary, the sisters ranged themselves on each side of the room, as when in choir ; and the dying nun smiled, as she once more saw herself surrounded by her religious sisters, in this last, and to her happy, hour.

The solemn rite proceeded : the spouse of Christ received in pledge her hidden Lord, who would, ere another dawn, receive her into His full and glorious presence. After a pause, during which many a silent prayer ascended to heaven, the community arose, and prepared to depart, in the same order in which they came ; and the lay sisters had already left the corridor, when a signal given arrested them : for one watchful eye had caught the last look—one watchful ear had caught the last sigh ; and a whispered message brought back the sisterhood, to chant the litanies for the departed soul.

At length the room was left by all, save the mother-superior and the infirmarian, who, rising from their knees, performed the last sad duties to their religious sister. The eyes and mouth were closed by the former : to her was yielded the washing of the face, the hands, the feet ; and after

this began the joint office of clothing, in the full habit of the order, the lifeless form. Ah! who can tell the tender yearnings of the bereaved heart of the superior, as she drew each part of the habit over the dead limbs, and arranged the veil, the cincture, and the beads? The friends had, indeed, been lovely in their lives, but in their deaths were divided; and nature for awhile refused to accept consolation from that unseen and wholly spiritual communion held with those departed. It was also the superior's solemn office to place in the joined and stiffening hands those vows which were the judgment of her loved friend! Seven years had passed since Caroline O'Mara, called in religion sister Mary Gabrielle, had pronounced the vows; and the document had been then consigned to the mother-superior, never to be touched or seen again till death.

As soon as it was known, on the following morning, throughout the enclosure, that sister Mary Gabrielle was no more, the lamentations were universal. The lay sister who had the principal charge of the House of Mercy was unable to conceal her grief from its inmates; and a burst of sorrow arose, which was heard in, and echoed from, the poor-school, where the sad news had been already whispered from one child to another. Sympathy and condolence were sincerely felt by all attached to the Order of Mercy, and especially by

the Ursuline community, where sister Mary Gabrielle had been a pensioner, and where her budding virtues had been nourished and trained to a blessed maturity.

Geraldine had been admitted to watch and pray with a professed sister an allotted half hour by the side of the departed nun. This was not the first time she had looked on death ; but it was the first time she had watched, in the silence of night, by one departed, since the farewell she had taken of the earthly remains of De Grey. The present scene was calculated to recall, without any fond human feeling, that hour of widowhood. "What," thought she, as she gazed on the beautiful features, and the almost awful expression of the countenance before her, once so sweetly mild and playful,— "what are the ties of earth, when this, the purest, truest, best of religious sisterhood, is, in its human part, susceptible of grief ! Little avails it now to sister Gabrielle that she was the joy of her community, a living spring, bidding all hearts be full at her approach of innocent and holy mirth. That she could weep, too, with those who wept, and pour the balm of tender sympathy into their wounds ; that she could reprove the sinner, instruct the ignorant, console the captive ; for in doing all this, from the effusion of an ardent and tender nature, she had on earth her reward. But greatly does it avail thee, blessed sister," continued Ge-

raldine, "to have done all this for His dear sake, who was thy sole aim and hope, and who is now thy joy and thy glory."

So entirely had Geraldine's thoughts been occupied by the death of this "loved, and lovely one," that it was with a pang of self-reproach she heard announced on the following day, that sister Ignatia was no more ! The community had attended the administration of the last sacrament to this sister, as on the former solemn occasion, but our heroine had been sent with another sister, to some distant sick calls, before the notice given from the infirmary.

The sisters assembled at the usual hour in the community-room, and spoke, with their wonted sweetness and charity, of their departed sister. They praised her humility, her patience, and each endeavoured to recollect something to her advantage. Still they had suffered no bereavement, they felt no sorrow. Each had fulfilled her duty towards the deceased, and had no "compunctious visitings." The sufferer had gone to her reward,—they rejoiced in her gain,—very soon the conversation returned to sister Gabrielle, and even in death sister Ignatia was forgotten ! With a sigh our heroine admitted that it could not be otherwise, for one sister had been everything, the other nothing, to her community.

After matins, Geraldine was visited in her cell

by the mother-superior, and invited to the chamber of death. The plain and almost vacant countenance of sister Ignatia, now wore an expression, which, during our heroine's experience, had never appeared, and the real form was now distinguished of the hitherto heated and swollen features. There was something in the sight of this lonely creature, which melted the tender heart of Geraldine; and truly, as she rejoiced to think that she was now in the full company of those, who, if suffering, would sympathize with her, she could not forbear weeping at the remembrance of her solitary life on earth. She recalled the times when some passing expression on that poor disfigured countenance, had given her an idea that the sister's deafness was not constant, and varied with the state of her nerves. How often must she have been unintentionally wounded? And had she always accepted these wounds in the pure meek spirit of perfect love? Was the sacrifice complete, and might she hope that no more of purgatorial process would be requisite? While thus our heroine thought and prayed, she perceived the superior, who had been kneeling a little apart in fervent prayer, suddenly fall prostrate on the floor; and alarmed by an immediate rush of painful conjectures, Geraldine moved towards her, but in an instant raising herself on her knees, her countenance radiant with joy, she exclaimed, in loud and exulting tones, "*Te Deum*

laudamus, Te Dominum confitemur," motioning to Geraldine to unite with her in the song of thanksgiving. Our heroine did so, repeating the alternate verses, at first from blind obedience ; but the cause was soon made evident to her, and her voice became likewise full of animated fervour. During these last afflictions, incense had been used, especially after death had taken place, as a proper precaution against the malady, for the survivors. The usual incense was burning in the room where sister Ignatia lay, when Geraldine entered, and although aware that something strange was now taking place around her, she scarcely dared trust the evidence of her senses, but looked into the cup where the incense had been burning, and found it totally consumed, while a fragrance far beyond anything she had ever known, continued to arise, in fresh clouds of the most exquisite fragrance ; and Geraldine recognized, with trembling awe and gratitude, that she was near one who had died in the odour of sanctity ! Yes ! the plain, the awkward, the repulsive sister Ignatia, who had on earth suffered a living martyrdom, known only to her God, had so faithfully corresponded to the graces vouchsafed her soul, had so perfected the holocaust, that the purifying fire having already consumed all that was not of pure gold, she had at once entered into the joy of her Lord.

After some time spent in this now sanctified

apartment, the mother-superior withdrew, to write to the bishop, requesting to know his wishes respecting the omission of the usual prayers for the faithful departed, and Geraldine remained alone with the body of the saint. Tremblingly she approached it, and bathed the feet with her tears. "I will not mourn," cried she, "that thou wert so little known. I will not even mourn, that perchance my looks or words might have added to thy sufferings, since every pang was but given thee for thy present glory. Ah ! happy obscurity, in which thou wert crucified with Jesus thy Lord. If thou hadst had one earthly friend ; if one mortal had but loved thee ; perhaps thou wouldst have lost thy crown. Ah ! sainted sister, in thy glorious home, remember one who has been but too much loved. Beg of our divine spouse to give me but himself, his love, his grace. I desire henceforth no more !"

The bishop was absent on a journey to a remote part of the diocese, and no answer to the mother-superior's letter, could arrive before the interment. Every form was therefore observed exactly as had been with the remains of sister Mary Gabrielle. After all the procession had quitted the vault, except the mother-superior, and the mother-assistant, who walked last, the same fragrance arose, and they both returned to render thanks for the favour vouchsafed them. The rest of the commu-

nity were left to form their own opinion of the circumstance, as related to them, and to receive whatever impression would the most tend to improve and comfort them. Some attributed the unusual fragrance to arise from some ingredient not before mixed with the incense, and that our heroine was mistaken in supposing the fire extinguished, and many impossible solutions were given by others, before the simple easy truth was admitted, that a supernatural odour had surrounded the corpse of sister Ignatia. God thus giving her honour amongst those with whom she had lived unknown, being hidden with Him.

Geraldine now pondered more than ever over everything she could recall of this departed sister ; but as might be supposed, she could fix on nothing remarkable. Sister Ignatia had observed her holy rule with undeviating fidelity, but had done nothing more. Nothing more than was required to form a saint. The observance of her rule also had been in simple conformity to the will of God, as shown her by her superiors. There were days, weeks, and at one period months, when from the rush of blood to the head, she was incapable of any duty whatever, except that of resignation. And in this, was she exercised sorely. Not only were the avenues of sight and sound barred up at those attacks in the head, but interior conflicts the most acute took place, rendering her a seeming

outcast from God and man,—conflicts, not such as Geraldine had known, of a few months only, but lasting, with but few intervals, during five years of her religious life, and terminating only with her death. To the mother-superior, who had been, as far as duty recommended, in her confidence, Geraldine applied, to be satisfied that sister Ignatia had really received a call from God to the religious life, “for,” said she, “the account you have given me of her powers and appearance, when she entered the convent, had given me the idea that anguish of mind, at having taken an inconsiderate, but irrevocable step, had been the gnawing worm at the root of that fair tree.”

“No,” replied the superior, “sister Mary Ignatia was ever fully convinced she was called to the religious life; that, in it alone, she individually could find salvation: thus, amongst her many trials, the doubt of her vocation never was added. Like yourself, sister Mary Paula, my mind has been filled with thoughts of this departed sister; the more so, that her career and destiny were so closely linked with that other sister so dear to us all, our own Mary Gabrielle.”

“Yes!” said Geraldine, “I was much struck when mother-assistant told me that these two sisters had been admitted, clothed, professed, and now are gone to heaven together.”

“I trust they are together,” added the mother-

superior, "for it is their dying within a few hours of each other, and especially sister Ignatia's following sister Gabrielle, that impress my mind, and will impress yours, when I shall have told you their relative history. This I am now enabled to do, by the permission granted to father Malone, by sister Ignatia, to reveal any part of her spiritual history which he may deem likely to benefit others. At the time of sister Mary Gabrielle's first application for admittance, we were quite unacquainted with Miss Bertram, her distant cousin. Several months elapsed, before sister Gabrielle, then Caroline O'Mara, definitively signified her choice of this convent of the order, and was accepted. The following day, Miss Bertram called; had a long interview with mother-assistant, who was then superior, and was admitted, as you are aware, on the same day, to the surprise and joy of Miss O'Mara. Little did we then suspect the voluntary martyrdom of Miss Bertram. In the world, they had, from family connexion, been playmates, then sister-pensioners at an Ursuline convent, and, on their entrance into the world, were friends, and thus continued. Such a being, as our sister Mary Gabrielle, could not but have been loved, cherished, and admired in the world, but she had early given her heart to God, and so truly had she given it, that she would not return to the convent which had reared her, being aware, that to this particular

institute she was called. She had, however, balanced some time before she could renounce her loved Ursulines, and Miss Bertram, without betraying her own secret, awaited her decision. This sacrifice of a beloved community in favour of another convent, was perhaps the only conflict which the peaceful heart of sister Gabrielle ever knew; for in wonderful variety does Almighty God attune his human instruments, to form the general harmony."

The substance of the wished-for history was as follows :—

From her earliest childhood, the love and approbation of those she herself esteemed, had been the bane of Harriet Bertram's spiritual progress, and, as if to punish her for this want of simplicity in the service of God, or as a means to draw her towards it,—probably both,—wherever she went, whatever she undertook, she found her cousin Caroline associated with her, to gain all hearts, and inspire all with the respect which even a child may claim in its simple choice of virtue. That which to Harriet Bertram was the result of a long contested struggle between the superior and inferior parts of the soul, seemed the gentle necessity of a pure will in Caroline O'Mara. In the latter was generosity, in the former magnanimity. One event followed another, to gladden the heart of one, and pierce that of the other, till at length a

jealousy, which arose to a passion, and led to the mortal sin of envy, took possession of the unhappy Harriet. To be emancipated from the constant intercourse with this favourite of Heaven and earth, who had drawn from her all hearts, and obscured all her talents and good deeds, was the only aim and hope which gave her peace; and every effort was exerted to bring about this desired event, for she had, at length, owned to herself, or rather listened to the suggestion of the enemy, that Heaven itself would not be bliss, if Caroline O'Mara were in the same mansion of glory with herself.

One night Harriet Bertram was alone, in a state of mind exceeding all that she had ever before felt: her heart throbbed with agony, and the pulses of her head seemed to urge the brain to madness. Again, and this time, in the one only choice of her life, had Caroline O'Mara crossed her path, to render it desolate and dark for ever. Awful flittings of each deadly feeling passed and repassed; each time assuming forms more distinct, and her soul was beckoned onwards to the verge of hatred and despair. Well she knew that the betrayal of her jealousy had caused the transfer of the heart she prized to the unconscious Caroline—unconscious now no longer. And what had been her part? The discovery that she had marred the happiness of her friend, had only

hastened the long meditated step of retirement from the world, and too late was Harriet to be freed from that thralldom of superior merit, under which she had struggled and writhed in vain.

She threw open her window, which, from an eminence in the vicinity of London, looked over that world of interest, of joys, of sorrows, of passions, and of crimes. From that distance all lay apparently hushed in midnight repose; the countless rows of twinkling lights seemed but in homage to the sleeping millions; and thus in outward calm stood she who bore within her breast an epitome of that vast city. She saw not the scene which lay before her, for it was the midnight breeze she had alone sought, and it fanned her pallid cheek, and raised from it the ringlets, which in that one night had turned to grey. And now she sprang suddenly from the window, and cast herself on the ground. Three hours did she lie prostrate and immoveable; but not a sense, not a nerve was slumbering—and at length she arose—the dawn of a new day faintly appeared in the eastern horizon, and the dawn of a new era to this child of storms. A resolution had been struggled for and taken, which but for the issue, which proclaimed it to be acceptable to God, must have seemed too daring. “Yes!” cried she, “I will follow her who eclipses me. I will live and die in her shadow. I will stifle this jealousy by every tie, every bond that can destroy

it. I will love her whom I now hate. Henceforth I defy ye, spirits of hell, for I can do all things through Him who strengthens me, and Him only will I serve."

We read of instances of a total change of character, from a new and expulsive influence given to the mind. Amongst others, of a spend-thrift,* who, from beholding from an eminence the patrimony then lost to him, became from that hour a resolute miser, and at length regained his lost estate: and thus for a Heavenly inheritance, did the vigorous mind of Harriet Bertram conceive and execute a design of far more meritorious daring. Jealousy is the passion of obtaining and possessing, to the exclusion of another, something that is not God. Envy of another's spiritual good does not result from a desire to be loved by God, but by his creatures, as being a favourite of God. It is jealousy, containing deceit and pride, and is therefore deadly. The soul which has truly entered into the pure love of God, can be tarnished neither by jealousy nor envy, because she is then made aware of the plenitude of God's love, which is sufficient for all creatures. One soul cannot encroach upon and disturb another in that boundless ocean. Harriet Bertram thus reasoned: and instead of attempting to conquer her jealousy by dwelling on, and investigating her vexed and

* Foster's "Essay on Decision of Character."

irritable feelings, she, as it were, left them, as unworthy of her notice, to starve and die, while she bent the whole force of her powerful mind and heart to the high aim of loving God alone. In this her ardent prayer and endeavour, she found an unexpected obstacle in the great happiness she enjoyed in her new life, where, unlike the idle confusion of the world, each sister had her allotted occupations in silence and peace: and Harriet, now sister Mary Ignatia, was as useful, as much respected, and as much trusted, as that bright star which had hitherto extinguished her lesser light. Thus, for the first time in her life, was she in calm prosperity. She found no difficulty in the convent observances, was blessed with perfect health, and was in charity, nay, more than charity, with all her religious sisters, and began to love her present life for the peace and happiness it gave her; in fine, she loved it as her end, not as a means to conduct her to that end which is God. And so skilfully did the enemy conceal her danger from her, so skilfully did he make her believe that in entering into religion the great work of her salvation was effected, that during nearly three years she was a model of piety and observance of her rule, without the purity of motive, which alone could avail her: the approbation of her religious sisters, and the pleasure of being with them, and like them, being, as she afterwards discovered, the sole springs of her zeal.

But God did not leave the soul which had once generously given herself to Him, to be cheated from His service by the wily arts of Satan. By degrees, every thing which had detained her on the surface of the spiritual life was withdrawn, and, for the safe keeping of her soul, and because humility is best taught by humiliation, it was permitted that she should fall into several mistakes and faults in the discharge of her external duties, and even be apparently guilty of neglect, involving so much inconvenience and disedification, that she forfeited much of the confidence reposed in her.

This trial was followed by nervous attacks; at first, slight; which terminated in a continued affection of one side of her person, and reacted on the mind, whence they originated; not destroying its powers, but the manifestation of them; manner, voice, and hearing, becoming confused; and causing her fully to experience the situation of the humbled religious,—“That which is pleasing to others shall go forward, that which thou wouldst have shall not succeed.”

“That which others say shall be hearkened to; what thou sayest shall not be regarded.”

“Others shall ask, and shall receive; thou shalt ask, and not obtain.”

“Others shall be great in the esteem of men, but of thee no notice shall be taken.”

“To others, this or that shall be committed, but thou shalt be accounted fit for nothing.”

At this, nature will, and in sister Ignatia's case, did, repine; and it was not till after many struggles, that she could even bear it in silence; for the mental storms were terrific; and not only did she rebel against the seeming accidents, and misunderstandings, which had deprived her of the confidence of the community, but she also felt bitterly the loss of her quick and skilful habits, and the helpless state of her person.

But, as in that turning point of her life, when she determined to live in the shade of another's excellence, she well knew that of herself the task was impossible,—but, through the grace of God, success was not only possible, but certain;—so now, after a conflict full as severe, did she resolve to love, not only inferiority, but contempt.

Sister Ignatia was at this time no novice in the theory of the religious life. She had been a professed nun three years; and all that could be written or said on the subject of humility, mortification, and conformity to the will of God, was familiar to her understanding. She well knew, that when her heart also could accept and embrace humiliation and contempt, she should enter into the true liberty of the spirit; but, as the process had been gradual, which had enclosed her soul from the religious community around her, keeping her sequestered from those hitherto so dear to her; so was the process gradual by which that soul was settled in tranquillity.

Two years had passed since sister Ignatia, deprived of every employment, and become a pitiable object, from corporal disease, had been resolutely corresponding with the will of God concerning her. She had retired within herself, and the doors of the external world being closed by her infirmities, the bright rays of Divine grace darting from on high, had showed her the vileness and disorder of the soul she had believed already fit to receive his crowning graces; and filled with confusion, she had exclaimed, "Who am I, Lord, that I should desire honour and esteem?" She had arrived at the first degree of humility, which enabled her to accept, without internal murmuring, the disgraces and afflictions sent her; and to receive the kind attentions of her sisters as an object merely of their mercy: and now, in order to advance farther in this science of the saints, she never permitted herself to expect the removal of her trials, but looked stedfastly for the time when, by the grace of God, they should assume a garb, and utter a language, that should charm her soul. At this time, an opening occurred for sister Ignatia to explain the circumstance which had brought on her the displeasure and correction of her superiors; and at first, a tide of joy rushed on her heart, and gave a power of speech and expression which she had believed gone for ever; but she resisted this natural eagerness to vindicate herself, and on her knees, besought the Lord to take the

affair so entirely into his own keeping, that if it were not for the good of her soul, she might never be tempted to disperse the cloud which shadowed her.

Her prayer was heard, and received its reward in the following manner. Two new postulants joined the community. They were not prepared for the appearance and movements of this afflicted sister; and in their first surprise, could not conceal, even from herself, their laugh of derision. This, which to them, was a subject afterwards of deep regret and humiliation, was, for the first time, a cause of thankfulness to sister Ignatia; and when, on the following morning, she stood in the choir, at the opening of prime, tears of joy—of a joy unknown before, coursed down her cheeks, as she felt an opening in her soul, through which, as each word of that “offering” fell on her ear, her Divine Spouse poured the rich consolations of his love. “O most divine and adorable Jesus, we offer up this first hour in honour and commemoration of thy being scoffed and falsely accused. O adorable Jesus, by the merits of these, thy exceeding great humiliations, we most humbly beseech thy divine Majesty to grant us the grace of a humble and contrite heart.”

“For years,” cried she, “have I been called by thy condescending love to share in thy humiliations, O my blessed Lord, and I have hitherto

shrunk from them. O blind and dull of heart, to discover thus late the secret of the meek and humble, by which alone we are able to know thee, and, therefore, able fully to love thee; for how love and be conformed to that which we know not?" From this period, sister Ignatia, like Magdalen at the feet of Jesus, entered into the "sweet repose of a soul recollected in her beloved."* There, bereft as it were of motion, she was to remain: and so fully did she perceive, accept, and love this state, that once, on partially recovering her hearing, when her superior wished to reinstate her in an office of trust, she besought the Lord, that if it were not from self-will, but in a spirit acceptable to Him, that her infirmities might never be removed. This farther prayer was heard. Sister Ignatia became still more infirm, and apparently vacant, while unutterable consolations distilled into her soul. On her deathbed, her external faculties recovered; and a few hours before her happy soul took flight from the prison of her body, when she was informed of the departure of sister Mary Gabrielle, she smiled, and calling her by her early name, "Caroline O'Mara, my joy is perfected, to know that thy salvation is secured. Yet, blessed soul, thou art detained from Heaven for a short space, till the slight tarnish given by human love and praise shall be effaced, and we together enter the bosom of our God!"

* St. Francis of Sales, "On the love of God."

CHAPTER XXII.

The loved of childhood's vanish'd hours
Now mourn within her hall,
That the sweet sound of her gladsome step
On other ears must fall.

But their unforgotten names are breathed,
When, kneeling and alone,
She vows in humble prayer before
The King of Mercy's throne.

Irene.

SOON after the death of her two religious sisters, and just before she entered on the distant preparation for her holy profession, our heroine received from the hand of mother Juliana, a pencilled note, as follows:—

“The writer of this is now waiting within your convent enclosure, to know from yourself, whether you are willing to remember and admit your unchangeably attached KATHERINE GRAHAM.”

If the change from Geraldine Carrington to the widowed Lady De Grey, had affected even the weaned and detached Angela, it may be supposed that the contrast was not less striking to Miss

Graham—from the blooming joyous bride of Sir Eustace, to the subdued and placid sister of mercy. As our heroine entered the convent parlour, Katherine, who was seated at the farther end of the room, arose quickly, to meet and embrace her; but stopping suddenly at the sight of that loved and well-remembered countenance, she covered her face with her hands, and sobbed with anguish.

“Katherine,” said our heroine, “this visit will comfort you. Look on your friend as a happier—far happier being than you have ever known her.”

The tones of her voice only increased the emotion felt by the warm-hearted and afflicted Katherine; but, at length, by a great effort, she controlled her grief, and, opening her arms, pressed the unresisting Geraldine to her heart.

“I have been on the Continent,” said she, “and did not receive your letter till long after its date. It was forwarded to my address in Paris, but I had then gone to the baths of the Brunnen. As soon as I found that what I had taken for romantic dreaming was on the point of being executed, I left my party and returned to Scotland, where, after but a week’s rest, I crossed from Port Patrick to Belfast, and arrived in this city last night. Oh, my beloved Geraldine, to have entered a convent some years ago would not have been so mad; but now, when so many discoveries have been made of the dreadful system carried on

in these pretended asylums of sanctity, how can you? But perhaps we are overheard?" added she, lowering her voice.

"No, indeed, we are not," said Geraldine, smiling.

"I shall, however, confine my voice to a whisper," continued Miss Graham, "for there may be listeners you know not of; or if you do know of them, you are forced to keep the secret. Tell me, Geraldine, how long have you been here?"

"Just fifteen months," replied our heroine.

"Fifteen months," repeated Katherine, pondering; "then you have been long enough to have discovered much, if not all, of the machinations and villainies of the cloistered life. Are there any cellars or vaults?"

"I do not know if there are any cellars," said Geraldine; "there are vaults beneath the chapel."

"Are there, indeed! Geraldine, tell me, I implore you, by our early friendship, by the memory of those years in which we thought and prayed alike, all that you know respecting those vaults?"

"I will tell you all I can know about them," replied Geraldine. "There is an outer and inner vault, which lie under the chapel and choir; the door, at the top of the stairs, which lead down to them, opens from the lower corridor; all which I can, with permission, show you."

"How did you find out all this?" cried Katherine, eagerly. "An inner vault—what is its use?"

"The deceased sisters of the convent lie there," replied Geraldine.

Katherine drew her chair close to Geraldine, and, in an agitated, imploring manner, whispered, "Are you sure that the dead only are immured there?"

"Ah, Katherine," said Geraldine, pressing the hand she held, "I have, indeed, been here long enough to have discovered part, if not all, the secrets of the convent life, and perceive that it would be as impossible for those histories from America and elsewhere to be true, as for purity to impart corruption, and truth a lie."

"You are taught to say all this," said Katherine, "or, perhaps, you may be still kept in ignorance; for you well know, Geraldine, how easily you could always be persuaded people were sincere and holy, when they were cheating and calumniating you all the time. You are too confiding, to have given much trouble hitherto to these convent politicians; but again, I well know you, Geraldine; if once your eyes be opened, there is no eluding your penetration, no curbing your indignation, and you will be quickly transferred to that inner vault, or some equally convenient place, where you will linger the victim of credulity. I came prepared," added she, still more

softly, "to carry you off with me, and have a cloak and bonnet in the carriage, which my maid is to bring under her own cloak when she comes in the dusk to fetch me. We have arranged the whole. Jennings is to remain concealed in the convent until you, who are to appear as my maid, shall have followed me out of the enclosure, and reached the * * * hotel, which is kept by Protestants."

The arch smile of earlier days, played round Geraldine's mouth, as she listened to this well devised plan; and she first asked Katherine why she supposed it would be difficult for her to make her escape at any time she wished, as she frequently left the enclosure with one of the sisters, to attend the sick and dying poor?

"But this very sister is a spy on you," said Katherine; "did you not write me word that two must be together?"

"I did so," said Geraldine, "and at the same time, Katherine, I gave you a sketch of our duties. Are they not incompatible with the histories you have heard?"

"I certainly think better of this order of charity or mercy, as it is called, than of any other, because some good is really done by these sisters; however, I have been informed, that the interior discipline is pretty much alike in all convents of tyranny and dark policy, where the victims cannot make known

their misery,—where one or two designing and jealous characters, may work upon the weak many, to crush the object of their hatred.”

“ The interior discipline of convents is very much alike,” said Geraldine ; “ our rule is originally that of St. Augustine, and our constitution very much like those of the Ursulines, in which order the scene was laid of the celebrated ‘ Six Months in a Convent.’ ”

Katherine looked amazed and even terrified at this avowal. “ Is any part of that book true ? ” said she.

“ The non-essentials are true, and the essentials false,” said Geraldine ; “ therefore it is a more artful book than any other of the kind published, where the romantic exaggerations can only amuse the reader. The authoress has evidently been in a convent ; and had not the consequences been so deplorable, I could be much diverted by the mistakes into which her ignorance, prejudice, and folly, made her fall. But instead of commenting on the errors and crimes of those who have been permitted to persecute that order of religious, let me read to you, from the copy of our Holy Rule, the principle which actuates the life of every nun.” Geraldine accordingly returned to mother Juliana, to request permission to show their Holy Rule to her Protestant friend.

“ My dear sister,” said mother Juliana, “ we do

not place our Holy Rule in the hand of every curious enquirer."

"I am aware," said Geraldine, "that I am asking a great favour; but when I shall have told you, dear mother, all the circumstances of this request, I think you will indulge me." And our heroine did, at length, prevail on mother Juliana to apply for permission to the mother-superior, to show a copy of the rule to her Protestant friend: which being granted, she returned with the book to Katherine, who opened it with great interest.

"You will not have time, perhaps," said Geraldine, "to read the whole, therefore I will point out to you the parts which contain the higher duties." And she directed Katherine's attention, 1st, to the object of the institute: in which it is said, that beside the principal end of all religious orders, such as attending particularly to their own perfection, the sisters must also have in view what is peculiarly characteristic of this institute of the Sisters of Mercy, that is, a most serious application to the instruction of poor girls, to the visitation of the sick, and protection of distressed women of good character.

"All this is very good," said Katherine, "except your presumption in supposing you can arrive at perfection. No one can be perfect on earth, and no Scripture reader thinks of such a thing."

"And yet," said Geraldine, "it is in the Scrip-

tures that we find, ‘Be ye perfect, even as your heavenly Father is perfect.’ But do not let us retrace our steps to the deserted ground of controversy, on the subject of God’s free grace, and man’s obligation to employ that grace for his salvation : it would only be a quarrel of terms and words, for we actually think alike, and so do our respective Churches, on the helplessness of human nature without grace, and its capability of doing all things through Him who strengthens it. To keep perfectly the first of the commandments, even, is impossible, until we enter into the next life, for to love the Lord, our God, with all our heart, and with our whole soul, with our whole mind, and with our whole strength, which is to be continually absorbed in Him, and to employ all our powers in loving, serving, and adoring Him, this is a command equal to that of ‘Be ye perfect.’ But, Katherine, it much conduces to our spiritual advancement to aspire to the highest things, and the apostle advises us to do this, saying, ‘Be zealous for the better gifts;’ and the great writers on spiritual life follow St. Paul in proposing to us the most perfect kind of virtue and devotion ; that by our contemplation of what is best, we shall be able, at least, to perform the duties of strict obligation. To aim at the least and the lowest only, to calculate how little will satisfy God and ensure our salvation, deserves that He should withdraw

the grace vouchsafed to us, and without which we can do nothing. Every Christian is bound,—oh ! how strictly bound,—to a perfect life, by his baptismal vows : were they strictly kept by every one, there would be no need of cloisters. What is perfection ? Is it not a continued union of the spirit with God, by faith contemplating Him, and by love adhering to Him ? But let us proceed with the rule for the Sisters of Mercy.”

Katherine glanced rapidly through the chapters relating to the exterior duties, the poor school, visitation of the sick, the admission of distressed women to the House of Mercy, all which she felt and owned to be in the true spirit of the gospel. Next followed the chapters on the three vows : the two first she thought beautiful in feeling and expression, but when she came to the chapter on “Obedience,” all the pride and independence of her nature arose in rebellion, at what she termed “that mean and pitiful vow,” and she dwelt with attention on every word of the chapter.

“The mother-superior,” said Geraldine, “besides the example which she is expected to give her spiritual daughters of every Christian virtue, is bound, under the vow of obedience, which she has herself made, to enforce the rule : nor can she command anything contrary to it. This being the case, you will cease to dread anything when you shall have read the chapter ‘Of Union and Charity.’”

Katherine then read aloud as follows:—

“ ‘ Love one another, as I have loved you.’ This was the special command of Jesus Christ to his apostles, and in the accomplishment of this divine precept, inseparably united as it is with the great precept of the love of God, consists, according to the apostle, the plenitude of the law. This mutual love our blessed Saviour desires may be perfect, so as to resemble, in some manner, the love and union which subsists between Himself and his Heavenly Father. This He inculcates in the strongest terms, during the last conference of His mortal life with His beloved disciples ; this was His last dying injunction, which, as a most valuable legacy, He bequeathed to all His followers, and by this they were to prove themselves really His disciples.

“ ‘ This mutual union and love should, therefore, eminently characterize religious souls ; this should distinguish them, above all others, as faithful spouses and servants of Jesus Christ. The sisters of this pious institute, founded and grounded on charity, or holy love, should, therefore, make that favourite virtue of their Divine Master, their own most favourite virtue ; this they should study to maintain and cherish so perfectly amongst themselves, as to live together as if they had but one heart and one soul in God ; this love for one another should be such as to emulate the love and union of the blessed in Heaven.

“‘They shall, therefore, in conversation, manners, and conduct, most cautiously avoid whatever may, in the least, disturb their union, or lessen in the smallest degree their mutual charity. They shall, as true followers of God, walk in love, as Christ loved us; preserving, above all things, charity, which is the bond of perfection; gaining over souls in the obedience of charity, and in sincerity of heart fervently loving each other.

“‘ They shall be willing, on all occasions, to help and assist one another; bearing with patience and charity each other’s defects, weaknesses, and imperfections. They shall never enter into disputes; but should they happen to differ in opinion on any subject, they shall propose their reasons with coolness, moderation, and charity. They shall never speak of the faults of the sisters, except to the mother-superior, and then only with a charitable desire of their amendment, and after consulting God in prayer, and their spiritual director. They shall avoid all rash suspicions and judgments, all jealousy and envy; and shall always bear in mind, to regulate their sentiments on this head, the noble description of charity given by the apostle,— ‘Charity is patient, is kind, envieth not, dealeth not perversely, is not puffed up, is not ambitious, seeketh not her own, is not provoked to anger, thinketh no evil, beareth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

“ ‘As the love and union of religious persons should be founded, not on flesh and blood, or any human motive, but on God alone,—as their hearts should be united together in Jesus Christ, their Spouse and Redeemer, in whom, and for whom, they should live and love one another,—the sisters of this religious institute shall banish all particular friendships, attachments, and affections, from amongst them; and shall scrupulously avoid all private parties and connexions, as the source of discord and divisions, and as hostile to purity of heart, to charity, and to the spirit of religion.’

“This is all beautiful,” said Katherine; “I have never read anything more so; it is the perfection of Christian love.”

“And *must* be followed,” said Geraldine; “not slightly, or partially, but constantly and entirely. And now, tell me, Katherine, are you not convinced, that it would be perfectly impossible for persons bound by such vows, to persecute each other?”

“I admit,” said Katherine, “that the theory of all this is admirable; but you know very well, Geraldine, that theory without practice is null and void.”

Here the friends were interrupted by a young professed sister, who came, on the part of mother Juliana, to say, that sister Mary Paula’s services in the school would be supplied by another novice; therefore she might remain with her friend.

“That is very obliging,” said Miss Graham, “but I should very much like to see your school;” and she arose to follow the sister.

“The children,” said sister Veronica, “are just preparing for the ‘examination of conscience;’ perhaps you would rather see the school at some other time?”

“No, indeed,” said Katherine; “I know enough of the usual routine of schools. I would rather see something new, if I may accompany you; and I do not understand what you mean by this public examination of conscience, unless it be like the methodist manifestation, or experience, of their spiritual state.”

As Geraldine perceived that Miss Graham was pleased with the young sister, and willing to see more of her, she left them, to be ready for the examination in the choir before noon, and Katherine followed sister Veronica to the school-room, where all were prepared to obey the bell. At the top of the room, was raised a seat, in which was the presiding sister, who, on the signal, arose, and gave out the short prayer that follows:—

“‘My God, I adore you; I love you; I return you thanks for all your benefits. Come, Holy Spirit, enlighten my mind, that I may discover all the faults whereby I have offended my Heavenly Father.’”

Sister Ursula then read, in a distinct and im-

pressive manner, the heads of the examination of conscience for that day.

“ ‘God created me for His glory; to know, to love, and to serve Him in this life, and to be happy with Him for ever in the next.

“ ‘Do I give glory to God? Could He look on me now, and say, ‘I rejoice that I created that child; she takes pains to serve me faithfully?’ ”

“Let each girl ask herself this question.”

The question was then repeated in the same manner, after which there was a pause; and Miss Graham’s searching eye was directed to the upper classes, where their demeanour led her to hope, notwithstanding the sudden entrance of a stranger, that the solemn question was receiving an answer from the heart of each.

After the pause had continued a few minutes, the sister continued: “ ‘Do I endeavour to know God, by learning what he has taught, which is contained in my catechism, and which He requires me to know and to practise?’ Let each one ask herself this question.” Another pause, after which followed:—

“ ‘Do I love God? Should I be unhappy if I thought He were angry with me? and if I displeased Him, should I do all in my power to be forgiven?’ ”—A pause. “ ‘Do I love God? Do I say my prayers, night and morning? Do I go to

mass on every Sunday and holyday? Do I go regularly to confession? Do I hate sin? Do I attend to all my religious duties?"

During the pause which succeeded, the recollection of the elder girls continued apparently rapt to Miss Graham's admiration; and she felt no inclination to be severe towards a row of laughing eyes, which peeped at her through fat and rosy fingers, from the little class near her.

The last question then followed. "Do I recollect the fault to which I am most subject?"

After the last pause, the sister gave the signal to kneel, and said, in the name of each child,—“For these, and all the sins of my life, I am sincerely and heartily sorry. I humbly beg pardon for them, through the merits of my Divine Saviour; and I resolve, with the grace of God, not to be guilty of them any more.”

The Angelus Domini rang, as sister Ursula concluded. Miss Graham remained during the succeeding acts of Faith, Hope, and Charity; with the “Litany of Jesus,” in which she joined with fervour; and when the devotions were concluded, remained some time conversing with the sisters, on the various regulations and discipline of the school, with all which she was much pleased, and, on our heroine's reappearing, willingly consented to the proposal of visiting the House of Mercy, which was in the opposite wing of the convent.

“I have often regretted,” said Katherine, “that while we erect and support penitentiaries, and Magdalene asylums without end, we have no places of safety and peace for the innocent. Prevention is better than cure; and it is hard indeed, that misfortune must be accompanied by guilt before it can be relieved.”

Two lay-sisters were superintending the House of Mercy, under a choir sister, who, from a recent change of offices, was now sister Margaret. The tie of country, and of distant kindred, was discovered and claimed by Katherine, who engaged in an animated and friendly discourse with sister Margaret, as she looked over the rooms devoted to the labours and repose of the inmates of the house. Some of those who were preparing, under strict discipline, to render some service in private families, had been rescued from death, or worse than death; and their histories served to confirm Miss Graham in her determination to serve the destitute and still virtuous servant out of place. She left a handsome benefaction for this House of Mercy; and returning with Geraldine into the convent, was shown over the principal part, and then again into the reception parlour.

“I have been greatly interested,” said Katherine; “I think the life led here is at once useful, pious, and happy; and would be without a drawback if you were at liberty to leave it, and could

give to God the free offering of a willing heart, unshackled by vows."

"But why leave a life that is at once useful, pious, and happy?" said Geraldine. "Why be so ungenerous towards our God, as to *lend* him our services, instead of *giving* them with all the confiding affection of a true spouse?"

"But," said Katherine, "I think it would give far greater edification, especially to Protestants, were they to know, that a community, who might disperse at the end of every year, yet remained firm to their choice of life through every difficulty that might arise. There is nothing inspires a Protestant with greater pity, than the bondage of irrevocable vows."

"Because," replied Geraldine, "few Protestants comprehend the nature of the union which, by her generous surrender, the soul then contracts with her Heavenly Spouse. For my own part, and I speak the feelings of every sister here, it would be impossible for me to offer 'the holocaust' for any limited period. My voice might be compelled to utter the incomplete vows, but I should then be guilty of 'mental reservation,' for my heart and voice would be at variance."

Katherine was now playing with the rosary which hung from Geraldine's cincture, and remained in abstracted thought till the latter said, playfully, "There is one omission, which has only

just occurred to me,—you have not searched the vaults.”

Katherine smiled and sighed. “I do not fear anything for you now, Geraldine; I believe you will be happy, even while telling these beads;” and she counted the relative number of “Pater Nosters” and “Ave Marias,” and again smiled and sighed.

“The rosary,” said Geraldine, “is a combination of vocal and mental prayer. It is true that we say a great many ‘Ave Marias,’ but during each decade there is some mystery in the life and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, on which we fix our minds and hearts. To-day we commemorate, each in private devotion, the five sorrowful mysteries: the agony in the garden—the scourging at the pillar—the crowning with thorns—the carriage of the cross—and the crucifixion; and while I dwell on each, I call to my aid that blessed creature, who in His love and sufferings bore the greatest share; letting my mind gently pass and repass, from the words I utter, to the subject of my meditation.”

“They are, indeed, subjects,” said Katherine, “on which the mind may dwell with increased love and gratitude.”

“Yes,” added Geraldine, “especially in that first mystery of love and sorrow, the agony of Jesus in the garden of Olives, in which all the other points of the passion seem to be comprised.”

Evening arrived, and Katherine Graham confessed to have no wish to carry on her plot for Geraldine's escape. The few tears she shed at parting had no bitterness in them, for Katherine's was a generous heart, and she felt comfort in the conviction of her friend's happiness. She carried with her several little keepsakes from the community; amongst the rest, a card, on which, in her countrywoman's clear printing, were the fourteen corporal and spiritual works of Mercy, as defined by the Church, viz.—

1. To feed the hungry.
 2. To give drink to the thirsty.
 3. To clothe the naked.
 4. To harbour the harbourless.
 5. To visit the sick.
 6. To visit the imprisoned.
 7. To bury the dead.
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1. To counsel the doubtful.
 2. To instruct the ignorant.
 3. To admonish sinners.
 4. To comfort the afflicted.
 5. To forgive injuries.
 6. To bear wrongs patiently.
 7. To pray for the living and the dead.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Ours is the sweet repose of hearts repenting,
The deep calm sky, the sunshine of the soul ;
Now heaven and earth are to our bliss consenting,
And all the Godhead joins to make us whole !
The triple crown of mercy now,
Is ready for the suppliant's brow ;
By the Almighty Three for ever plann'd,
And from behind the cloud held out by Jesus' hand.

Keble.

GERALDINE continued to dwell with interest on thoughts connected with the two departed sisters, and in one of her conversations with the mother-superior, having expressed a wish to learn the hidden life of sister Ignatia, the latter assured her, that the hidden life does not require those fences from the external world, which were necessary to the character of sister Ignatia. "She had," continued the mother-superior, "a disposition peculiarly prone to live out of herself, and to depend on others for her happiness. You, sister Mary Paula, who are so much interested in watching the variety of means by which Almighty God effects the sanctification of his creatures, especially as

evidenced in the spiritual lives of our two departed sisters, may now receive edification from one of whom I am constantly taking a silent lesson, and who leads a life more completely hidden than even sister Ignatia; or to speak more correctly, she leads a more supernatural life; for, in the midst of exterior occupations, her soul is in peace: nothing ever troubles her, because nothing unduly interests her; and whether an arrangement succeed or not, as she knows that in the end God must be equally glorified, so is she equally and calmly pleased; for she dwells on earth but through necessity,—her heart is in heaven. This holy indifference to everything that is not God, produces an evenness of demeanour and of temper towards all. Many of the sisters have advanced far in this blessed science of the interior life, but none so perfectly as our mother-assistant.”

“The mother-assistant!” echoed Geraldine, a little disappointed; “to own the truth, dearest reverend mother, she has not interested me at all.”

“She does not wish to interest you or any one,” replied the mother-superior, smiling, “she wishes to be hidden with God; and you see how well she has succeeded.”

“I shall with great satisfaction hear more,” said our heroine, “for, beyond the general edification she gives in common with the rest of the sisterhood, I cannot recall a single word or deed of the mother-assistant, by which I should derive profit.”

“She has not been called upon to give you edification beyond what you mention,” said the mother-superior, still smiling. “Have you not heard the saying, that ‘if each one attended solely to her own business, the convent would be a heaven on earth?’ No one enforced this more, when mother-superior, and no one follows it more truly now she is under obedience, than our mother-assistant.’”

“I was not aware that she had ever been superior,” said our heroine.

“She was not only superior, but at the end of the three years, was re-elected. After which, by the constitutions of our order, another must succeed to the office. Previously to being superior, she had been mistress of novices.”

“Then,” said Geraldine, “I understand and greatly admire the silence, the humility, the obscurity of her life, as it now appears to me. How great the constraint might be over the cheerful harmony of the community, if she were obviously remembering ‘how things were,’ during her office of superior or mistress of novices.”

“The hidden life, to be truly such, must not betray itself,” said the mother-superior; “a sister who desires to be truly hidden with Christ in God, should present nothing that could distinguish her from the rest of the sisterhood. Her manner, her movements, should be so unobtrusive, as to excite

no attention ; and at recreation, she should endeavour to promote the general cheerfulness rather by engaging others to talk, than by speaking much herself: and this little stratagem of the humble, our mother-assistant has perfectly attained. You will do well to observe, at the next opportunity, the easy unaffected manner in which she will throw out some little topic for others to enlarge upon, and then retire into a silence that appears not to be such, from the smiling attention she gives each speaker. To farther appreciate mother-assistant's spirit of recollection," continued the superior, "you should know more of her office, which is not only, as the name implies, to give aid to the mother-superior, and supply for her occasional absence from choir and other public offices, but it is also her duty to inquire into and provide for all the wants of the sisters, which, with some dispositions, might lead to incessant talking and bustle. She also superintends sister Josephine's charge of the clothing for the poor, and the lay-sisters in the soup and other food distributed to them. She makes out the lists of places to be visited, and for the distribution of the charity, after it has been submitted to me for approval: and, although the bursar has the immediate charge of all the house-keeping and accounts, she consults with mother-assistant in every difficulty: so that there cannot be well imagined a situation in which the soul is

more tempted to distraction and trouble about many things, than in the office held by her, whose tranquillity of soul I propose as a model for all the sisters."

"Mother-assistant is not the only one who avoids speaking of herself," thought Geraldine, as she listened to these well-merited encomiums from one to whom she had given and continued to give her highest meed of praise.

"When mother-assistant was superior," continued her successor, "her exhortations, whether in public or private, invariably ended in recommending peace to the soul; and her previous reasoning had been so effective, that it was rarely that turbulent or vexing thoughts continued to harass those who had been to her for counsel and comfort. I have mentioned to you the exterior duties of mother-assistant, that you may perceive, not only that they disturb not a soul that is once settled in holy peace, but also, that you may fully appreciate the humility which prevents her from ever mentioning at recreation or other times, any circumstances relating to her own department. No one would be aware from anything that falls from her lips, that she held any office whatever in the convent. And she might almost be said, neither to be seen nor heard in the midst of questions and directions of all kinds, so great is the calm reserve of her whole demeanour; and obscured and tar-

nished as a human copy must ever be of any perfection of the Deity, to her, if to any mortal, might be applied the saying of St. Augustine, ‘always in action, and always in repose.’ ”

“This feeling or principle,” said Geraldine, “which prevents mother-assistant from ever al-luding even distantly to her many occupations, might arise merely from that instinctive good taste and refinement which would prevent a lady in the world from introducing her household concerns, but it is from a purer motive, that of humility : and this necessity of a pure intention must hold good in every demonstration of virtue. Other-wise, a sister may flatter herself she is a lover of silence, when she is only sullen, very disengaged when she is only very selfish, and very interior when she is only very indolent.”

“Self-knowledge,” said the mother-superior, “which is the preparation for the spiritual life, and receives the foundation-stone of humility, is the only security against our building mere ‘castles in the air.’ ”

“There is nothing I admire more profoundly,” said Geraldine, “than a calm state of mind ; the extreme and abuse of which, however, would be indolence, and at length stagnation : and I love the epithet ‘holy,’ which is a guarantee that the virtue to which it is prefixed, is protected by di-vine grace. ‘Holy’ silence, the offspring of humi-

lity, and of the loving sense of the presence of God, must be twin-born with peace."

"For the obtaining this blessed calm of the soul, great and painful sacrifices may be required," said the mother-superior, "but when once established, prayer and watchfulness are alone requisite to preserve it, and this very watchfulness must be calm."

"Exterior occupations and contradictions can no more disturb this blessed peace," said Geraldine, "than do the innumerable boats and vessels which glide on the surface of a calm lake; but let interior conflicts arise,—spiritual combats,—and where then is the peace, the calm of the soul? Must it not resemble that same lake, whose once smooth and lucid waters are now tossed and foaming, from the hidden tempest nursed within? This calm must surely be a supernatural gift, to be totally imperturbable, and a gift not always granted to the most faithful and holy souls, which are often tried by interior anguish through the whole of their spiritual life."

"The higher region of the soul may rest in peace," said the mother-superior, "although the tempest may agitate the inferior part, and she will calmly suffer this purifying process of interior tribulation; for the peace which she has attained, and hopes to regain, she desires not for her own consolation, but for the glory of God; not that she may

enjoy rest, but that she may be enabled to contemplate and adore, without hindrance, the Divine perfections, and become, in that contemplation, moulded to His image. While, therefore, temptations and anguish assail the soul, till she is apparently overwhelmed by them, and may, like Jonah, exclaim, ‘All Thy billows and Thy waves have passed over me. . . . I am cast away out of the sight of Thy eyes,’—she adds with the same prophet, ‘but yet I shall see again Thy holy temple!’”

“There is a state in which the soul would be more apt to lose her blessed peace,” said Geraldine, “than even under the trials and temptations we have described. It is that, in which her calm seems to be sunk into a total indifference, not only to earthly, but to heavenly things; and she, calmly it is true, but stupidly, pursues her way, more vegetating than alive; admitting every truth of religion in a dry abstract manner, without a single emotion of gratitude or joy. In this state, when spiritual sloth must so reasonably be dreaded, it appears to me, that the soul, in rousing from it, and in dread of its recurrence, would be in danger of a violent reaction, and lose her holy calm in the effort to escape from tepidity.”

“The life of faith is a life of humiliation and mortification,” replied the mother-superior; “and the soul in the state you describe, is undergoing the trial of that faith, without any other light or

support that she can perceive. She has to force her apparently cold heart through all her religious duties, without experiencing any reward for her fidelity, in the sensible emotions of hope and love; and, as you justly observe, there is danger of her fearing that she has lost them, and of mistaking this aridity for sloth. But let her continue faithful to every duty, and sloth will not be permitted to steal over her in the guise of holy calm. She is beloved of God, although she cannot perceive it; and loves Him more in this hour of desolation, than when she the most rejoiced in her emotions of ardour and tenderness: let her continue watchful and resolute, and she need not quit her holy calm for an artificial state of anxiety and care."

Geraldine, after this conversation, felt much comforted and encouraged. She had justly considered the case of sister Ignatia as extraordinary, and not to be expected; yet, it had seemed to authorize her belief, that to be fenced from exterior things was the only means by which the soul could enter into communion and rest with God; but she now perceived, that when the soul has once arrived at the contemplative life, exterior employments do not molest her; for the soul has then gained that power of attention to God supremely, which prevents the inferior attention given to creatures, from disturbing her blessed peace. God being not only the principle of all

her actions, but absorbing all her superior faculties. She then becomes suspended from creatures in the will and affections, and united to the Divinity, so as to be even lost to herself in His truth and love.

It was with this desire and ambition, that our heroine entered on the two months' preparation for her holy profession. Her ardour was not abated ; on the contrary, it was more intense than when she entered on that for her reception ; but it was now silent, calm, little to be perceived by others, and requiring not the human sympathy heretofore so essential to her happiness.

She had, during the year and a half past in her noviciate, considered the truth, and fully embraced it, that the noviciate is the precious time for acquiring knowledge of spiritual things, and of attaining to such a degree of contemplation, that the exterior affairs which would surround her after her profession, might be as though they were not. She now took a review of this period, during which the two essential parts of the contemplative life,—mortification and prayer,—had been her study. Mortification, or renunciation, which comprises all those virtues of patience, humility, and temperance, by which we die to ourselves ; and prayer, by which we unite with God. This retrospection was calculated to inspire her with humble confidence that God would continue the good work begun in her ;

and while she resolved to co-operate faithfully with the grace vouchsafed her, she was desirous not to force on her way beyond the leadings of the Spirit, remembering, that “the spiritual part of the soul should have the same patience with the sensitive part, that she would exercise towards another person.”

In the retreat which Geraldine had now entered upon, a greater portion of her time was dedicated to mental prayer; which consists of meditations on those subjects which were most suited to her state of preparation. Thus, the early days of it were dedicated to contemplating the perfections of the Deity, and the benefits conferred on her by having been created for an immortality of bliss, by her preservation and redemption, and the more especial favours of conversion to the true Faith, and a call to a life of religion; under which considerations, the soul of Geraldine was overwhelmed with sentiments of adoration and praise towards Him—the Holy One, to whom she was about to consecrate herself for ever.

Her meditations were afterwards directed to sin, and its direful effects on the soul, as preventing her from giving herself entirely to God; which, even in its lesser degree, stains and weakens the soul, so as to expose it to temptation, and to grievous offences, even to the danger of mortal sin.

Applying these considerations to herself, she

discovered, by rigid self-examination, those tendencies which she conceived most dangerous to her, and as presenting obstacles to her perfect conversion and entire dedication to God. The three vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, which she was about to take, were necessarily opposed, and offered correctives to whatever affections or attachments yet remained to prevent her perfect union with God; and, with her soul washed by tears of contrition, through the merits of her Saviour, it now panted to make an offering of its faculties, its powers, and its whole being, to God, on the altar of faith. Thus was she led, by a thorough detachment from earthly objects, into a fitting state for those meditations which followed, and which principally consisted in contemplating the life and sufferings of her heavenly Redeemer.

First, on the examples which our Lord, in his passion, has given us of a perfect holocaust: the first meditation being on His prayer and agony in the garden, in which mystery she was principally called upon to consider the voluntary acceptance which Jesus Christ made of His death; for although He accepted it at the moment of His incarnation, yet was He pleased to accept of it anew in this solitude of the garden of Gethsemani, and permitted the sensitive or inferior part of His soul to feel the bitterness of that all-surpassing death,—and even to oppose it, saying, “Father, if it be

possible, let this chalice pass from me ;” while the spiritual, or superior, part of His soul remained immoveable, and added, “ not my will but *Thine* be done.” In these struggles and combats of His soul, when all the ignominies, tortures, and derelictions of His passion, were spread in foretaste to His mental vision—when the blood which had rushed from its natural course, burst forth from all parts of His body—when an angel was sent to comfort His sacred humanity, he accepted the weight of human penalty and Divine wrath, and entered on the tremendous death before Him. These considerations would make the destined spouse of Jesus, then, after His example, conquer the repugnance which the sensitive, or inferior region of the soul may feel in the mystical death of her religious profession ; and, with a generous effort of love, let the spiritual and superior part accept this death, with all its internal and external sufferings.

Secondly, in following the Divine Jesus through every stage of His prolonged sufferings, in which was realized the prophecy of Isaiah, “ We have seen him, and there was no beauty in him. He was as a leper, and one forsaken of God ; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with infirmity.” With a heart melted by these bitter contemplations, the soul of one seeking to live only to Jesus, exclaims, “ O Lord, my heart is ready ! let my death be like *Thine*, consummated !”

Pursuing her considerations, she beheld her Divine Saviour triumphing over sin, death, and the devil, from whom He gathers all the spoils. Now is the prophecy of Isaiah accomplished,—“ I will arise, saith the Lord ; I will be exalted and extolled, and I will be exceeding high.” Adore Him in this glorious state, and while rejoicing with ardent love, remember, that all this glory is the fruit of His death.

The glorious Ascension of our Lord, presented to Geraldine a blessed contemplation, in which she saw that earth cannot delight her who has spiritually risen with Jesus Christ, but that she must seek those things that are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God ; for, “ where her treasure is, there also must be her heart.”

Her conversation, likewise, “ is in Heaven,” with God and his angels, so as to converse but little with creatures, but reserving herself in interior recollection and retreat, for spiritual intercourse with the inhabitants of Heaven ; speaking to them often in prayer, that by this communication, separating herself from the earth, she may become celestial.

Meditating on the coming of the Holy Ghost, the source and principle of Divine life, she considered how the apostles, after the Ascension, withdrew into solitude, there to await the promised Paraclete, or Comforter ; thus setting her an ex-

ample of preparation, that the “love of God might be poured forth into her heart by the Holy Ghost, who is given to us.”

The consideration of the great work of Redemption could not but give rise to reflections in Geraldine’s mind, on her lost condition by nature;—first, in original sin, and then replunged in actual sin; stripped of grace and virtue, in a total incapacity to good, and violent propensity to evil; when, notwithstanding this deplorable state, God looked on her with the design of taking her for His spouse, saying, “Let her live;” that is, the life of grace; and for this end, when she had forfeited her renewed innocence in baptism, restored her to His grace by the sacrament of penance, anointed her with the oil of grace in confirmation, gave her Himself in the adorable sacrament of the altar, and having thus rendered her capable of the Divine alliance, is about to take her to himself in quality of his most dear spouse. Thus humbled in her own eyes, by the sight of her origin and helplessness, and filled with gratitude at the unmerited favours heaped upon her, the affianced soul sighs to think, with how many more beauties and ornaments of grace would she have been enriched from the same bountiful hand, had she been more faithful to those received.

Geraldine was then led to meditate especially on the chief of these graces,—namely, on the Holy

Sacrament of the body, blood, soul, and Divinity, of Jesus Christ, by which her soul had been nourished and prepared for the divine espousals, and by which the celestial life was to be sustained in her soul ; admiring the means which God employs to preserve the union He has contracted ; and saying with St. Ignatius, the martyr, “ I take no pleasure in corruptible meats, nor do I desire the dainties of the world ; I wish only for the bread of life—the bread of God ; I desire no drink but the blood of Him who is incorruptible love, and eternal life.”

CHAPTER XXV.

He comes not in power, He comes not in wrath,
And the glory of heaven is not on His path ;
The children of men bear the monarch of might,
And low, with the lowly, He veileth His light ;
Yet, lift up, ye gates, O ye princes,—'tis He !
The monarch of glory, who cometh to me.
Who then is this monarch of glory ?—reply :
The Lord strong in battle, the great God on High.
But, who is this monarch of glory ? O say :
Favour'd soul ! 'tis the spouse who has won thee to-day.

*By a Nun, on receiving the Blessed Sacrament at
her profession, Salford Convent.*

THE day at length arose, calm and bright as their hopes, on which our heroine, and her three English religious sisters, were greeted with those joyous words, "Behold the bridegroom cometh ! Go ye forth to meet him : " that day which they were to consider as the image of eternity, since they were then to commence that strict union with God, which by His grace, would be at length consummated in glory. Their meditation that morning was on the words of the Prophet Hosea, "And I will espouse thee to me for ever. I will espouse thee in justice and in judgment, in loving kindness and in tender mercy ; I will espouse thee in faith."

The ceremony took place at an early hour, with holy mass and communion. The religious sisterhood had, at a previous mass, offered up the intention of their communion for the novices about to be professed. All was on that day in harmony with the hidden life into which these were to enter. With the exception of the pious benefactress of the convent, all who filled the chapel and choir were consecrated to the immediate service of God. A congregation of holy priests and friars, who had themselves despised the "empire of the world and the grandeur of the earth,"—and whose presence was the only thing that recalled our heroine to a silent consent and satisfaction in the sympathy and support of human example,—gave her a foretaste of that blessed Communion of Saints to be hereafter perfected in glory.

The procession now began,—preceded, as on the day of the reception, by the Cross-bearer, while the choir sang the "Veni Creator;" and having entered the choir, Geraldine knelt at the grate; the act of profession, with pen and ink, lay near her.

The bishop now intoned from the altar, "Emitte spiritum tuum," &c. "Send forth thy Spirit, and they shall be created."

Response.—"And thou shalt renew the face of the earth."

Celebrant. "Let us pray.—O God, who by

the light of the Holy Ghost, hast instructed the hearts of the faithful, grant us in the same Spirit a right understanding, and ever to rejoice in His consolations, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

The bishop then blessed the black veils which lay near the altar, saying, "Our help is in the name of the Lord."

R. "Who made heaven and earth."

V. "Show us, O Lord, Thy mercy."

R. "And grant us Thy salvation."

V. "O Lord God of Hosts convert us."

R. "And show Thy face, and we shall be saved."

V. "O Lord, hear my prayer."

R. "And let my cry come unto Thee."

V. "The Lord be with you."

R. "And with thy spirit."

V. "Let us pray.—We humbly beseech Thee, O Lord, that Thy bounteous blessing may descend on these garments which are to be put on the heads of Thy servants, and that they may be blessed, consecrated, unspotted, and holy, through Christ our Lord. Amen."

"O God ! Head of all the faithful, and Saviour of the whole body, sanctify with Thy right hand these coverings of the veil, which for Thy love and Thy most blessed Mother's, Thy servants are about to have placed on their heads ; and may they by Thy protection, with equal purity of mind

and body, ever preserve what is mystically signified thereby; that when, with the prudent virgins, they may come to the everlasting recompense of the Saints, they being also prepared, may be worthy to enter, conducted by Thee, to the nuptials of endless felicity, who livest and reignest one God, for ever and ever. Amen."

The bishop then sprinkled the veils with holy water, in the name of the Blessed Trinity, and the following gospel was chanted by the officiating deacon.

" ' At that time Jesus said to his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his Cross and follow me. Whosoever will save his life shall lose it, and he that shall lose his life for my sake, shall find it; for what doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels, and then he will render to every one according to his works.' "

The mother-superior and assistant then conducted our heroine to the grate, where, on her knees, she was thus interrogated by the bishop, " My child, what do you demand? "

" My lord, I most humbly beg to be received to the holy profession. "

" My child, do you consider yourself sufficiently

instructed in what regards the vows of religion and the rules and constitutions of this institute? and do you know the obligations you contract by the holy profession?"

"Yes, my lord, with the grace of God."

"May God grant you perseverance in your holy resolution, and may He deign, in His mercy, to consummate what He has begun. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen."

Sisters Camilla, Mary Vincent and Josephine, then succeeded our heroine at the grate of the choir, being questioned in the same manner by the bishop; after which, the organ pealed forth its rich tones at different intervals, and announced the solemn mass of the Holy Ghost, during which, the following prayers were said.

"Grant, O Lord, to these Thy servants, whom Thou hast deigned to adorn with the honour of chastity, effectually to complete the work they have undertaken; and, that they may present to Thee its full perfection, may they deserve to bring what they have begun to a conclusion, through our Lord Jesus Christ Thy Son, who with Thee, liveth and reigneth in the unity of the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end. Amen."

"Grant, we beseech Thee, O Lord, in virtue of the sacrifice presented to Thee, that Thy servants here present may persevere to the end of their

lives, that the gates being open at the coming of the great King, they may be worthy to enter with joy into Thy heavenly kingdom, through Christ our Lord," &c.

Post Communion.

"O God, who hast established Thy habitation in a chaste heart, look down upon these Thy servants, and may they receive Thy consolation, whatsoever they require, through our Lord Jesus Christ," &c.

The mother-superior then chanted the versicle, "Offer to God the sacrifice of praise."

Response.—"And pay thy vows to the Most High."

In the meantime, the mother-assistant had taken the lighted taper from Geraldine, and given her the act of profession. She then advanced to the grate and sang the "Vota mea Domino," &c. ; "I will pay my vows to the Lord, in the sight of all His people, in the courts of the house of the Lord." Geraldine then knelt, and the Confiteor was said, after which, the bishop pronouncing the "Domine non sum dignus," &c. ; "Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldest come under my roof," &c., approached the grate, bearing with all solemnity the adorable Sacrament, which he held before her, while she thus pronounced her vows.

"In the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and under the protection of His immacu-

late Mother, Mary, ever Virgin, I, Geraldine Carrington De Grey, called in religion, sister Mary Paula, of the most Holy Trinity, do vow and promise to God perpetual poverty, chastity, obedience and the service of the poor, sick, and ignorant, and to persevere until the end of my life in this Institute of our Blessed Lady of Mercy, according to its approved rule and constitutions, under the authority and in presence of you, my Lord and Right Reverend Father in God, Patrick M'Namara, bishop of this diocese, and of our Reverend Mother, Honora O'Brian, called in religion, Mary Theresa, mother-superior of this convent of our Lady of Mercy. This day of in the year of our Lord

Our heroine then marking with the pen given to her a cross after her signature, delivered the act of profession to the mother-assistant, who knelt at her left hand, and the awful moment—the concentration—the essence, as it were, of the whole solemn rite, when her soul having pledged herself to her Divine Spouse, was to receive in return His pledge and earnest of mystical union : that moment was arrived, and the bishop, pronouncing the following words, administered to her the Holy Communion.

“ What God has commenced in thee, may He Himself perfect : and may the body of our Lord Jesus Christ preserve thy soul unto life everlasting. Amen.”

With feelings far more of Heaven than of earth, sister Mary Paula retired from the grate, and the three sister-aspirants to the same Heavenly espousals, advanced each in turn to the grate; our heroine was conducted to the mother-superior, and, kneeling, presented to her the Act of Profession, and received from her in return the sacred ring, which had been previously consecrated by the following prayers:—

“O, Creator and preserver of the human race, giver of spiritual joy, guide to eternal salvation, deign Thou, O Lord, to send Thy holy spirit, the paraclete, from Heaven, and Thy holy benediction on this ring, that it may be a powerful defence against every assault of the Devil. And in Thy name I bless ✠ and consecrate ✠ it. In the name of the Father ✠, and of the Son ✠, and of the Holy ✠ Ghost. Amen.”

When the mother-superior had received from the four newly-professed sisters the Acts of their Profession, and had placed on the finger of each the sacred symbol of her espousals, they retired to their usual places in the choir, and from the altar the antiphons and prayers continued thus:—

“Come, Holy Ghost, replenish the hearts of Thy faithful, and kindle within them the fire of Thy divine love.

“O God, unto whom all hearts are open, all desires are known, and from whom no secrets are

hidden, purify the thoughts of our hearts by the inspirations of Thy holy spirit, that we may deserve perfectly to love Thee, and worthily to praise Thee, through our Lord Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with Thee, and the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end. Amen."

"We beseech Thee, O Lord, that our actions may be preceded by Thy inspirations, and carried on by Thy assistance, that every prayer and work of ours may always begin with Thee, and by Thee be happily ended, through Christ, our Lord. Amen."

During this last prayer, Geraldine and her three companions were instructed to rise, and having again advanced to the grate, to kneel there during the following prayers:—

V. "The Lord be with you."

A. "And with thy spirit."

V. "Let us pray. O Eternal God, and Almighty Father, who knowest the weakness of human frailty, look down, we beseech Thee, on these Thy servants, and vouchsafe to strengthen their weakness with the overflowing abundance of Thy benediction, that, assisted by Thy grace, they may, by a holy, pious, and religious life, be able vigilantly to keep the vows which they have made, by the influence of Thy holy inspiration, through Christ, our Lord. Amen."

"Let us pray. May the Lord Jesus Christ,

the Father of mercies, who willeth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he be converted and live, who calleth all to repentance in his unspeakable mercy and wonted tenderness, may He inspire you with true and constant contrition of heart and holy repentance, that you may be able worthily to wear the habit of religion and holy profession, and, following your holy promises, persevere in His holy service, and happily arrive, with His elect, to everlasting joys. Who, with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, liveth and reigneth, one God, world without end. Amen."

The bishop then sprinkling the newly professed with holy water, in the name of the blessed Trinity, the choir commenced the "Tenuisti manum, &c." "Thou hast held me by my right hand: and by Thy will Thou hast conducted me: and with glory Thou hast received me."

Response.—"For what have I in Heaven, and, besides Thee, what do I desire upon earth?"

The newly-professed sisters then replied, in unison, "Defecit caro meo, &c." "For Thee my flesh and my heart have fainted. Thou art the God of my heart, and the God that is my portion for ever."

The bishop then entoned the "Veni Sponsa Christi;" "Come, Spouse of Christ;" which the choir continued thus, "Receive the crown, which the Lord hath prepared for thee for ever."

“ May the Lord be to thee a helper and protector, and pardon all thy sins. Amen.”

Geraldine then sang the “ *Suscipe me, Domine, &c.*” three times, in honour of the blessed Trinity, the music changing not in air but in key, which produced a solemn and touching effect. “ Uphold me, according to Thy word, and I shall live, and let me not be confounded in my expectation.” Then, kneeling, she received the black veil from the bishop, who said, in placing it on her head,

“ Receive the holy veil, the emblem of chastity and modesty, which mayest thou carry before the judgment seat of our Lord Jesus Christ, that thou mayest have eternal life, and mayest live for ever and ever. Amen.”

Geraldine then rising, and holding her lighted taper, sang the “ *Posuit signum* ;” “ He has placed his seat upon my forehead, that I should admit no other lover but Him.”

The other newly-professed sisters then received each her veil with the same forms, and all kneeling, the bishop blessed them as follows :

“ May God the Father, who in the beginning created all things, bless you. Amen.

“ May God the Son, who, as our Saviour came down from heaven, and did not refuse to suffer the death of the Cross, bless you. Amen.

“ May God the Holy Ghost, who in the river Jordan, rested on Christ in the form of a dove, bless you. Amen.

“ And may He in perfect Trinity, sanctify and preserve you all the days of your life, whom we expect to come to judgment : who with the Father and the Holy Ghost, liveth and reigneth for ever and ever. Amen.”

“ May the Lord pardon all your infirmities.”

“ Amen.”

“ May He heal all your diseases.”

“ Amen.”

“ May He redeem your life from destruction.”

“ Amen.”

“ May He strengthen and confirm in all things your desire, who in perfect Trinity, liveth and reigneth one God, world without end. Amen.”

Then was entoned the “ *Regnum Mundi*,” &c.
“ The empire of this world and all the grandeur of this earth, I have despised for love of our Lord Jesus Christ, whom I have seen, whom I have loved, in whom I have believed, and towards whom my heart inclineth.”

“ My heart hath uttered a good word, I speak my works to the King.”

“ I have chosen to be an abject in the house of my Lord Jesus Christ. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.”

The newly-professed sisters then prostrated themselves, and while they thus lay dead to the world and admitted to the sweet joy of the new and celestial life, the glorious “ *Te Deum*” arose

in solemn chant, from the holy brethren and sisters in the chapel and choir.

What were the thoughts and aspirations of our heroine, as thus she found consummated the intense desires of her heart? We cannot tell,—we presume not to intrude on the holy retirement of her soul with God, and henceforth we must conjecture more than certify her thoughts; for she has found the secret of that hidden joy laid up for those who seek to be forgotten; who, turning from the love of God's best creatures,—not from weariness, or want of charity,—but from a purer, higher motive, have found their rest with God!

Six months after the profession of the four English Sisters of Mercy, they returned to their own country, accompanied by three experienced nuns of the order. If, in the hearts of these Irish sisters, some national regret mingled in this farewell to their own beloved community, it was superseded by the generous wish to add the sacrifice to those already made of home's sweet ties, for the love of Jesus Christ, their Spouse: and with still more devoted feeling, and more sacred tone, they might have sung their native strain,—

“Though the last glimpse of Erin with sorrow I see,
Yet, wherever Thou art shall seem Erin to me.”

It had been so arranged, that the sisters arrived in Elverton on the eve of the Festival of Our Lady of Mercy, which is the feast of the order. Seven years before, had loud acclamations and peals of welcome greeted the bride, and heiress of the Manor, on her return from the Continent. She now passed through the main street of the town, and by the lodge-gates of her birth-place, unnoticed, in one of two hired vehicles, which conveyed the humble band to their new convent; but on the former occasion, she had joined in the penitential breathings of the Miserere psalm, while now the song of thanksgiving arose in the hundred and second psalm; and we may well conclude that our Geraldine's soul blessed the Lord, that all within her praised His holy name, and that she forgot not all that He had done for her, in redeeming her life from destruction, and crowning her with mercy and compassion.

Father Bernard, Isabel Lester, and a pious assemblage of aspirants for the veil, awaited their arrival, for solemn benediction and thanksgiving: and on the following morning, after the sad silence of three centuries, the joyous peal and tollings were heard once more of the "Angelus Domini" from the tower of the Abbey; and again did consecrated voices send forth their homage to the mysteries of the Incarnation.

The spiritual and corporal works of mercy followed the duties of the choir, and all within and around the Abbey bid fair to realize the motto of the convent,—

“Gloria in excelsis Deo,
Et in terra pax!”

THE END.

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tive. It is only requisite to add, that the lives, in the biographical part, will be chronologically disposed; that the authorities, both of Dodd and of the Editor, will be carefully stated in the notes; and that a General Index to the contents of the whole work will be given at the end of the Continuation.

Of the materials to be employed in the execution of this task, and of the sources whence those materials are to be derived, a short account may, perhaps, be expected. Following the example of his predecessor, the author has resolved to found his narrative, as far as possible, on original documents, to seek whatever information he can obtain from unpublished records; and, where the importance of a paper seems to require its insertion, to print it entire in the Appendix. Of such documents it fortunately happens that several large collections have been preserved. Some were rescued from the foreign colleges, at the period of the first French Revolution: others were gradually formed, in this country, by the persons to whose successors they now belong. They consist of private and official correspondence, between various members of the clergy themselves, or between the clergy and their agents, in Rome, of bulls and public despatches, of diaries and visitations of colleges, and of various other papers, whose character it is unnecessary to describe more particularly in this place. With a liberality which cannot be too warmly or too gratefully acknowledged, these have all been unreservedly placed in the hands of the author. There are some others, also, to which he still hopes to obtain access; and with them, and with such other documents as he expects will be transcribed for him abroad, he trusts that he shall have collected sufficient for the completion of his present undertaking.

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This valuable work is thus noticed in the *Dublin Review*, No. IV.

"The object of the present work is to prove that in science, as in every other department of human activity, the controul of an all-wise and all-loving Providence is visible; that out of evil he often causeth good to come; that all the efforts of perverse men to belie the word of His revelation, conduce only to His greater glory—the consolation of the just, and the humiliation of the wicked; that in the works of God there is no contradiction, nor even real discrepancy: that a perfect unity, a sublime harmony, pervades all his manifestations, whether as declared by external nature, or by the inward conscience, or as deposited in the word of his special revelation. To say that a theme no noble, yet so arduous, has been worthily executed by our author, is to pronounce the highest eulogium on his work. The first characteristic of his book is, the admirable method with which, out of elements the most opposite, and even the most heterogeneous, he has produced an harmonious whole, and moulded subjects the most various, and even the most dissimilar, into one connected work. Thus philology, physiology, geology, chronology, and early history, archæology and biblical criticism, successively come under review; yet so masterly is the author's talent of transition, that we pass from one subject to the other without scarcely perceiving the change; and while each of those sciences is made to adduce its testimony in illustration and confirmation of the truth of Holy Writ, the collective evidence of the whole, by the skilful arrangement of the parts, acquires additional force. The next quality of this work is, the vast and various learning which the author has brought to bear upon the subjects he treats—a learning always full, but never exuberant, and pervaded throughout by a spirit of the soundest criticism. Indeed the research which Dr. Wiseman has here displayed, is above all praise: the time, labour, and expense which the composition of such a book must have cost the writer, few will be able to appreciate. In truth, from the extensive acquaintance here evinced with the living literature of the Continent, especially of Germany; from the frequent citation of writings almost inaccessible to the English scholar, such as foreign periodicals, detached essays, and transactions of foreign learned societies, we make bold to affirm that none but an Englishman, long resident on the Continent, could have been the author of this production. The last and higher characteristics of the work before us, are a sagacity of judgment, and an honesty of purpose, which no love of theory, however specious, not even the more laudable zeal for religion, can ever shake or suborn—a power of philosophic generalization, unhappily so rare in our country, and which can impart an interest to the most trifling, and a dignity to the most important, subjects; in fine, a style, free, bold, and manly, and which rises at times to a lofty eloquence. In conclusion, we can only say, that if a work of this transcendent merit, calculated as it is for so extensive a circle of readers, and carefully excluding all topics of religious controversy between Catholics and Protestants, should fail to meet with that encouragement it so well deserves, we shall only have to sigh over the hopeless degradation of the national taste."

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Edinburgh Observer, February 23, 1838.

"The proprietors of this periodical are unquestionably making great exertions to place it on a fair level with the most distinguished of its contemporaries. There are several articles in the present number highly distinguished by learning, eloquence, and talent in general; and more than one of first-rate excellence. Every one knows that it advocates the cause of Catholics and Catholicism, and like every other party journal is tinged with the peculiar views of the party to which it belongs. This is inseparable from its very existence; but the opposition is carried on in a spirit of such manly fairness, that no honourable and right-thinking man can reject it on that account. Its redeeming qualities (we speak in reference to Protestants of course) are those essential excellences of mind which all men of intellect, of every religious sect, admire and praise. 'Saint Simonism' is a brilliant exposure of that monstrous system which, for a time, appeared to have unsettled the wits of the enthusiastic youth of France. The rise, progress, and final explosion of the St. Simonian doctrines, are traced with a masterly hand; and as we do not recollect of the subject having yet been so fully treated and laid open to us, the public are especially indebted to the *Dublin Review* for this article. There is also an admirable article on 'Lord Mulgrave and the Protestants of Ireland,' from which we shall draw up a paper for next week. We conclude by recommending the present number of the *Dublin Review* as fully equal in talent to any of its predecessors, or to either of the great leading periodicals of this country, which appeared in January."

The Kendal Mercury, March 17, 1838.

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The Athenæum, May 14, 1838.

"The *Dublin Review*, the accredited organ of the Irish Catholics, and the eighth number of which is just published, is taking more decidedly the colour of its vocation. We are the better pleased with it on that account. In the abstract, it is true, we dislike the literature of religious parties, in every one of its harlequin hues; for, however specious, it tends to narrow the intellect and to corrupt the heart. But since such things must be—since men cannot see objects in the same light—since, differing amongst each other, they will shut themselves up in sects and factions, and, doing so, must act in consonance with their jealous notions of exclusion—we think it best that they should speak out and declare themselves for what they are. It is good that men should talk and write on whatever is passing in their bosoms, and thus account to others, no less than to themselves, for their principles and practices. Truth, daylight, and free discussion, are the natural remedies for the sectarian spirit, and the many evils it engenders. With respect, however, to the Catholics, we are more especially pleased to see them take their place openly in the ranks of religious freemen, as men daring to display the reasons for the faith within them. It is one of the good fruits of emancipation; it shews that they feel themselves citizens. Too long has oppression driven the Catholic party—forced, compelled them—upon a course of mystification. The literary articles in the present number, which may be read with pleasure by all, are—one on 'The Lives and Exploits of English Highwaymen'; a discussion on the Irish Poor-Law Question, replete with knowledge of the country whose interests are involved; a bird's eye view of revolutionized Egypt; and an elegant and ladylike review of the Irish national novels, which private rumour attributes to an accomplished daughter of the house of O'Connell. If Catholic education produces many such women as the writer of this paper, it cannot be conducted in the illiberal and grudging spirit which is so vehemently charged against it: and again we say, let mind have fair play, and we defy false doctrine, heresy, and schism, in all their various and proteiform manifestations."

The Athenæum, March 2, 1839.

"The eleventh number of the *Dublin Review* is before us. This journal is pursuing its career successfully. At the commencement of the undertaking, we declared our satisfaction at the attempt to establish an organ for the expression of sentiments, which had long been pent up; and we are well pleased to observe, that each new publication exhibits greater courage and frankness in their enunciation. The resulting benefit is twofold: first, as respects the dignity of man, and the social amelioration to be expected among a people, who dare not only think, but speak for themselves. The Catholics of Ireland, emphatically its people, have for centuries been forced into a cringing attitude, before the face of a party, a position most unfavourable to the development of a sound moral character. It augurs well for Ireland, then, and for the empire, that it lifts at length its head among the civilized communities of Europe, that it walks abroad in the face of day, and gives its reasons for that faith, for which it has so long suffered. The *Dublin Review*, though addressed to Catholics, was not intended, we presume, to be a mere Catholic journal; and it should not be suffered to become so. As it is with England, so it is with Ireland; the middle and upper classes stand much in need of a better lay education: and it was one among the many benefits, that we anticipated from the appearance of this journal, that it would contribute powerfully to supply that want. The first article, on the many glorious things overlooked by English travellers in Italy, and the excellent paper addressed to the Irish public, on the subject of the railroad dispute, we find expressly calculated to promote this latter object. The third article is a masterly exposition of the bad spirit in which education has been treated in Ireland; and the eighth, on 'Prison Reports,' is a clever defence of the Irish nation from calumnious accusations, proving by infallible statistics that the Irish are not more steeped in crime than their neighbours; that, with respect to crimes against property, they have less to reproach themselves with, than the English."

Caledonian Mercury, March 18, 1839.

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